IDENTIFYING WITH THE BEAST: ANIMALITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND SOCIETY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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IDENTIFYING WITH THE BEAST: ANIMALITY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND SOCIETY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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My dissertation reconsiders the formation of subjectivity in Anglo-Saxon England. It argues that the Anglo-Saxons used crossings of the human-animal divide to construct the subject and the performance of a social role. While the Anglo-Saxons defined the "human" as a form of life distinct from and superior to all other earthly creatures, they also considered most humans to be subjects-in-process, flawed, sinful beings in constant need of attention. The most exceptional humans had to be taught to interact with animals in ways that guarded the self and the community against sin, but the most loathsome acted like beasts in ways that endangered society. This blurring of the human-animal divide was therefore taxonomic, a move to naturalize human difference, elevate some members of society while excluding others from the community, and police the unruly and transgressive body. The discourse of species allowed Anglo-Saxon thinkers to depict these moves as inscribed into the workings of the natural world, ordained by the perfect design of God rather than a product of human artifice and thus fallible.

"Identifying with the Beast" is informed by posthumanist theories of identity, which reject traditional notions of a unified, autonomous self and instead view subjectivity as fluid and creative, produced in the interaction of humans, animals, objects, and the environment. My dissertation is divided into four chapters, each looking at a figure in Anglo-Saxon society (the teacher, the warrior,

the sovereign, and the saint) and its construction through the discourse of species. In my first chapter, I analyze the three poems of the *Old English Physiologus*, which align the teacher's ability to influence an audience and create the Christian community with animals' ability to attract other beings with pleasant sounds and smells. The second chapter examines the roles of animals in Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry. I argue this genre utilizes animality to imagine the capabilities of the extraordinary warrior body but also to depict animals being "outanimaled" and reify human superiority. Chapter Three, through a reading of legal texts and the poem *Elene*, shows how Anglo-Saxon sovereignty was allied with the hawk and horse. This worked to establish the Anglo-Saxon sovereign as a continuation of Germanic and Roman forms of kingship as well as emphasize the ruler's ability to project his power over large expanses of space. The final chapter looks at the cult of the dogheaded Saint Christopher, seeing its popularity in Anglo-Saxon England as the product of a syncretic belief in the supernatural power of sacrificial, protective canine. Further, it argues the Anglo-Saxons imagined Christopher's overcoming of animality and emergence as a missionary to parallel their own history as a once-bestial folk brought into Christendom and responsible for using their newfound humanity to evangelize those non-Christians proximate to them. "Identifying with the Beast" thus challenges previous work that maintains the human-animal distinction began to erode in the twelfth century, pointing out instead that this supposed divide has always been permeable.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matthew (Matt) E. Spears was born in Seattle, Washington, but grew up in northern San Diego, California, surrounded by cars and coyotes. He received his B.A. in Literature and Writing Studies from California State University San Marcos in 2006 and his Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from Cornell University in January 2017. His research interests include Old and Middle English literature, Old Norse-Icelandic literature, ecocriticism, posthumanism, and contemporary American popular culture.

For Mom

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INTRODUCTION

Gildas was not a happy fellow. Writing his *De excidio Britonum* ("*The Ruin of Britain*," hereafter abbreviated *DEB*) sometime between 480 and 550 CE, he told the story of how his society was in moral and political collapse.[1] The kings who were supposed to protect their subjects had become more interested in enriching themselves and their cohorts, and those rulers who showed actual concern for the people were murdered. The church was negligent as well, its representatives seeking earthly delights rather than the salvation of the laity. The more the inhabitants of Britain sinned, the sicker they all became in soul and body, vulnerable to attack by conquerors from outside their land. With the leadership not performing its duties and the Roman occupiers having left the island, God would directly intervene in an attempt to save the British, but the Maker's call for repentance and warning that enemies were fast approaching went ignored.[2] Desperate, a king, unnamed by Gildas but identified by later chroniclers as Vortigern, invited Germanic mercenaries to fight off the invading Scots and Picts.[3] It was a move soon regretted when these hired swords, the Saxons, turned

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[1] For a breakdown of the different datings of the *DEB*, see Christopher A. Snyder, *The Britons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 123 (Table 6.3). More recently, Karen George has proposed a date between 510 and 530 based on the birth date that Gildas provides for himself: forty-three years and a month after the defeat of the Saxons by Ambrosius. Karen George, *Gildas's* De Excidio Britonum *and the Early British Church* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), 2-4.

[2] *DEB* 22.1. The edition and translation of the *DEB* used here is from *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, rev. ed., ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore, 2002). Textual references to the *DEB* are from that edition's numbering of chapters and sections.

[3] *DEB* 23.1. Bede names the king in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*HE)* I.14, noting that "*placuitque omnibus cum suo rege Vurtigerno ut Saxonum gentem de transmarinis partibus in auxilium vocarent*" ("they agreed all with their king Vurtigern to call to their aid the nation of the Saxons beyond the seas"). All quotations and translations of the *HE* are from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) and will be cited by the *HE*'s book and chapter number. John H. Ward argues that Gildas does identify Vortigern but obliquely. By referring to the king as a "*superbus tyrannus*" ("proud tyrant"), Gildas may be playing on the meaning of Vortigern's name in British, which is "high lord" or "great prince." John H. Ward, "Vortigern and the End of Roman

on the king and his people.

When Gildas looked for a way to effectively and concisely admonish the kings and clergymen who had led the stubborn British *populus* down this disastrous path, he often thought of animals. Gildas turned to animals because he recognized the impact their mention had on those familiar with animal symbolism in Christian and Classical works as well as on those who lived proximate to real-life animals and interacted with them on a regular basis (though many in his audience possessed both kinds of experience).[4] He knew that to label a human an animal could be a great insult, especially in a culture that believed God had created man as superior to the beasts.[5] In the *DEB*, the five tyrannical kings whose rule had brought devastation on the island were analogized to the apocalyptic beasts (the lion, bear, leopard, and dragon) of Daniel and Revelation.[6] The clergy were like the duplicitous wolf in sheep's clothing, an image taken from the Sermon on the Mount.[7] Their flock, the common British

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Britain," *Britannia* 3 (1972): 277.

[4] Michael Lapidge argues that Gildas was educated in a late Roman school, trained not only in the Bible but also in Virgil, likely Cicero, and in rhetoric. See Michael Lapidge, "Gildas's Education," in *Gildas: New Approaches*, ed. Michael Lapidge and David Dumville (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1984), 27-50. For archaeological evidence on the relationship between human and domesticated animals in Roman Britain, see Mark Maltby, "The Exploitation of Animals in Roman Britain," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, ed. Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 791-806.

[5] There has been some debate among anthropologists as to why certain animals are used as insults for humans. Edmund R. Leach proposes that those animals who fall between established binary oppositions become prominent in verbal abuse (as well as having taboos preventing their consumption). This would include the dog, an animal but close enough to us to be thought of as almost human, and the fox, both a game animal that is hunted but also a wild, predatory hunter itself. See Edmund R. Leach, "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse," in *New Directions in the Study of Language*, ed. Eric H. Lenneberg (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1964), 23-63. Cf. John Halverson, who critiques the simplicity of Leach's model and provides an expansive list of counterexamples, such as the fox being used for complimentary purposes (as in "sly as a fox") or animal insults based on species that seem categorically certain, like labeling someone as a wolf ("Animal Categories and Terms of Abuse," *Man* 11.4 [1976]: 514-16).

[6] *DEB* 28-33. The biblical passages are Daniel 7.1-8 and Revelation 13.1-2.

[7] The image of the "wolf in sheep's clothing" is from Matthew 7.15: "*Adtendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces*" ("Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep,

folk, could be compared to a "*jumentum*" ("domestic draught animal or beast of burden, esp. ox, horse, or ass")[8] who, not properly domesticated, refused the "*rationis frenum*" ("bit of reason") placed upon them by their handlers,[9] a labeling inspired by Psalms 31.9.[10] This last image expressed Gildas' belief that the restoration of British morality could come only from those in power casting off their animal characteristics (greed, ferocity, and so on). The elite would have to remember their duty to train and guide the otherwise insensible masses, obstinate beings lacking, at least temporarily, the rationality (*ratio*) that classical philosophers and Christian exegetes saw as

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but inwardly they are ravening wolves."). The Latin text and translation of the Vulgate are from the new edition of the Douay-Rheims published as part of Harvard University Press' Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series, *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation*, ed. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010-2013).

[8] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (*DMLBS)* s.v. *iumentum* 1a.

[9] *DEB* 22.1 The passage reads,

> Interea volente deo purgare familiam suam et tanta malorum labe infectam auditu tantum tribulationis emendare, non ignoti rumoris penniger ceu volatus arrectas omnium penetrat aures iamiamque adventus veterum volentium penitus delere et inhabitare solito more a fine usque ad terminum regionem. Nequaquam tamen ob hoc proficient, sed comparati iumentis insipientibus strictis, ut dicitur, morsibus rationis frenum offirmantes, per latem diversorum vitiorum morti proclive ducentem, relicto salutari licet arto itinere, discurrebant viam.

["God, meanwhile, wished to purge his family, and to clean it from such an infection of evil by the mere news of trouble. The feathered flight of a not unfamiliar rumor penetrated the pricked ears of the whole people – the imminent approach of the old enemy, bent on total destruction and (as was their wont) on settlement from one end of the country to the other. But they took no profit from the news. Like foolish beasts of burden, they held fast to the bit of reason with (as people say) clenched teeth. They left the path that is narrow yet leads to salvation, and went racing down the wide way that takes one steeply down through various vices to death."]

[10] This source is identified by Thomas O'Loughlin, *Gildas and the Scriptures: Observing the World Through a Biblical Lens* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012), 146. The Psalm reads, "*Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellectus; in camo et freno maxillas eorum constringe qui non adproximant ad te*" ("Do not become like the horse and the mule who have no understanding; with bit and bridle bind fast their jaws, who come not near unto thee."). This verse was used by a number of early Christian thinkers. Ambrose of Milan, in his *Hexaemeron* [CPL 0123], advised his congregation that "*Aut si te edacitas equi intemperantia que delectat et adhinnire ad feminas uoluptati est, delectet in freno maxillas tuas camo que constringe*" ("If the voracity and intemperance of the horse and his whinny of pleasure directed toward the mare give you delight, you should also find pleasure 'with bit and bridle to bind fast your jaws'"; *Hexaemeron* VI.3.10). All translations of the *Hexaemeron* are by John J. Savage, *Saint Ambrose: Hexaemeron, Paradise, Cain and Abel* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1961).

separating man from animals.[11]

Were the British leaders to restore the humanity of the people, they would no longer suffer at the hands of their bestial invaders. In Gildas' system, the Scots and Picts were maggots crawling out of holes in the ground on a warm, sunny day, a nuisance to humans, but one easily eliminated with the proper attention.[12] The Saxons, though, were harder to categorize, and as the *DEB* proceeds, they are compared to predators both domestic (the dog, the wolf) and foreign (the lion).[13] This chimerical blending of everyday and exotic animals told Gildas' audience that this was a threat that could be handled but required greater urgency than the response to the Scottish and Pictish incursions of years past.[14] Gildas further increases the stakes of

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[11] See below, 44-52.

[12] *DEB* 19.1.

[13] This memorable passage occurs in *DEB* 23.3-4:

> Tum erumpens grex catulorum de cubili leanae barbarae, tribus, ut lingua eius exprimitur, cyulis, nostra longis navibus, secundis velis omine auguriisque, quibus vaticinabatur, certo apud eum praesagio, quod ter centum annis patriam, cui proras librabat, insideret, centum vero quinquagina, hoc est dimidio temporis, saepius vastaret, evectus, primum in orientali parte insulae iubente infausto tyrrano terribilies infixit ungues, quasi pro patria pugnaturus sed eam certius impugnaturus. Cui supradicta genetrix, compriens primo agmini fuisse prosperatum, item mittit satellitum canumque prolixiorem catastam, quae ratibus advecta adunatur cum naipularibus spuriis.

["Then a pack of cubs burst forth from the lair of the barbarian lioness, coming in three keels, as they call warships in their language. The winds were favourable; favourable too the omens and auguries, which prophesied, according to a sure portent among them, that they would live for three hundred years in the land towards which their prows were directed, and that for half of the time, a hundred and fifty years, they would repeatedly lay it waste. On the orders of the ill-fated tyrant, they first of all fixed their dreadful claws on the east side of the island; ostensibly to fight for our country, in fact to fight against it. The mother lioness learnt her first contingent had prospered, and she sent a second and larger troop of satellite dogs. It arrived by ship, and joined up with the false units."]

Alex Woolf has argued that a substantial portion of this passage (the mention of the warships and the prophecy) may in fact be an interpolation, a claim he makes based on the fact that "*cyula*" ("war-galley") derives from the Anglo-Saxon word "*ceol*" ("An Interpolation in the Text of Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*," *Peritia* 16 [2002]: 161-67). If we were to remove the interpolated material, what we would have left is the image of the lion cubs emerging from the lair followed by the one of them fixing their claws onto the island, an even more emphatic rendering of the Saxons as animalistic than one broken up by the prophecy.

[14] This move may be traceable to Jeremiah 5.6: "*Idcirco percussit eos leo de silva, lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos: pardus vigilans super civitates eorum: omnis qui egressus fuerit ex eis capietur, quia multiplicatae sunt praevaricationes eorum, confortatae sunt aversiones eorum*"

this conflict by picturing the entire island as prey, the land and its people combining into a single animal body.[15] If the British do not change their lives, the Saxons will latch onto them with their claws and feast.

For Gildas, wolfishness was a state to be feared and destroyed, but the invading Saxons might have taken the wolf label as a compliment. They have left us no written records from before their conversion to Christianity, but the material culture that survives from analogous societies in Iron Age Scandinavia allows us a glimpse at how they might have used animality to depict their most exceptional warriors. A notable example believed to date to around the same time the *DEB* was composed is a bronze die, plate D, found at Torslunda in Sweden.[16] The die shows a human figure wearing a helmet whose horns end in the beaked heads of birds, and he appears to be engaging in some sort of war dance (or just combat) with another figure, one with a human body but the head of a wolf.[17] Some have argued that these two beings are fighting, but others have wondered if they are instead companions, the lupine figure being a member of a skilled warrior class in the North Sea Zone associated with the wolf.[18]

("Wherefore a lion out of the wood hath slain them, a wolf in the evening, hath spoiled them, a leopard watcheth for their cities: every one that shall go out thence shall be taken, because their transgressions are multiplied, their rebellions are strengthened").

[15] *DEB* 23.4.

[16] Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Sutton Hoo and Other Discoveries* (New York: Harper Magazine's Press, 1974), 214-22 (plates 57b and 59a).

[17] The image of this warrior has been found adorning a number of objects from seventh-century Scandinavia (particularly the burials at Vendel and Valsgärde) and Anglo-Saxon England. The most well-known examples of the motif from Anglo-Saxon finds are the "Finglesham Man," who is depicted on a buckle, and a pair of dancing warriors on the Sutton Hoo helmet (itself closely paralleling a pair found on the Valsgärde 7 helmet). See Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, H.R. Ellis Davidson, and Christopher Hawkes, "The Finglesham Man," *Antiquity* 39 (1965): 17-32. See also Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 207-8.

[18] Stephen O. Glosecki, in *Shamanism and Old English Poetry* (New York: Garland, 1989), sees the die as depicting a war dance that was part of a shamanic ritual where both the human and wolf-headed figures participated; at 70. In a later

Either way, the die appears to celebrate those warriors whose ferocity in combat rivaled that of predatory animals, a characteristic that could be expressed by possessing an animal head or proving to be a more effective fighter than a being who did.

In the *DEB*, the story of the British and Saxon conflict ends with the defeat of the latter at Mount Badon by a Roman general, Ambrosius Aurelianus.[19] The British are gifted yet another chance at saving themselves, but for Gildas, their future was uncertain. We know what happened: The Saxon "wolves" overran the island just as Gildas feared. We also know that the Anglo-Saxons would struggle for centuries with foreign invaders of their own from Scandinavia, and the *DEB* would influence how Anglo-Saxon writers explained such attacks. The homilist Wulfstan was a product of several cultures: a clerical, Latinate one, a native Anglo-Saxon one, and later in life, he would be immersed in an Anglo-Scandinavian one while serving as archbishop of York. As Viking raids were decimating the Anglo-Saxons in the early eleventh century, Wulfstan called upon his people to realize they were living worse than heathens,

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essay, however, he writes that the wolfheaded being may in fact be an adversary of the helmeted warrior, relating the former to the *fylgja* and *ulfheðinn* of the sagas; see Stephen O. Glosecki, "Movable Beasts: The Manifold Implications of Early Germanic Animal Imagery," in *Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Nona C. Flores (New York: Garland Publications, 1996), 14. Davidson sees the scene as relating to the veneration of Odin and suggests three possibilities for what is being depicted: warriors in the ecstasy of battle, warriors in the "Other-world" celebrating their entry into Odin's kingdom, or some sort of ritual dance ("Finglesham Man," 26-27). See also A. Margaret Arent, "The Heroic Pattern: Old Germanic Helmets, *Beowulf*, and *Grettis Saga*," in *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium*, ed. Edgar C. Polome (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1969), 130-99; Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 66-72; and Neil S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala: Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002), 372-3.

[19] *DEB* 25.3.

"*hundum gelicost*" ("like hounds"),[20] and committing "*fylðe*" (*DOE* "filth, foulness, moral or spiritual pollution; foul practice").[21] The *nom de guerre* Wulfstan used here and elsewhere at times to address an audience, "*Lupus*" ("wolf"), not only played off his own name but fit well with the forceful, apocalyptic message he wanted to deliver.[22] In this time of peril, in a world rapidly approaching collapse, a wolf who would normally threaten to devour a sinful people was now attempting to protect them.

Animal Studies for Anglo-Saxon England

My study, "Identifying with the Beast: Animality, Subjectivity, and Society in Anglo-Saxon England," argues that human relationships with real-life animals and perceptions of animality (whether based off observation, imagination, or some combination of the two) shaped the construction and performance of human identity throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. By "human identity," I mean not only the understanding of what separated human animals (hereafter abbreviated as "humans")

[20] *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* XX.89. This canine comparison is made in a section where Wulfstan alleges that Englishmen are, as a group, purchasing a woman and sharing her sexually. Quotations of the *Sermo Lupi* are from *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957; repr. 1998) and based off Bethurum's edited version of the text found in London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.i. References will be to Bethurum's numbering of texts and lineation. All Old English translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[21] *Dictionary of Old English Online* (*DOE*) s.v. *fylðe* 3.

[22] Andrew Rabin summarizes the scholarship on Wulfstan's pen-name and notes that Wulfstan's "reasons for adopting a pseudonym are unclear: the obviousness of *Lupus* (a translation of his name's first syllable) makes a desire for anonymity unlikely, and the fact that he always appears as 'Wulfstan' or 'Wulfstanus' in official documents indicates that he did not see it merely as a convenient Latinisation." Andrew Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 11. Dorothy Whitelock suggested that Wulfstan was following the style of Alcuin and his circle, who used playful animal names in their correspondence ("Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 [1942]: 40), but Wulfstan's message required an entirely different register than Alcuin's letters. Glosecki believes that Wulfstan was taking advantage of his audience's respect for and fear of the wolf and that the homilist was "eager to invoke its dogged tenacity in his sermons. In a sense, he was a Christian wolf soldier" (*Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, 189). Simon Keynes makes much the same point as Glosecki when he writes that Wulfstan's pen-name was "a warning to his flock that he was out on the prowl" ("A Note on Anglo-Saxon Personal Names," in *St. Wulfsige and Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Millennium of the Benedictine Abbey, 998-1998*, ed. Katharine Barker, David A. Hinton, and Alan Hunt [Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005], 22).

from the other beings who populated the Earth, the human-animal distinction, but also what separated humans from other humans. The "discourse of species" was vital for establishing difference not only within the Anglo-Saxon community but also between those who were inside of that community and those who were excluded.[23]

I am influenced in this dissertation by poststructuralist and posthumanist theories of subjectivity. They resist the traditional humanist idea of the subject as fully formed and autonomous and instead view subjectivity as fluid and the product of (rather than prior to) discourse and performance. Further, the subject is defined as much by what is absent from it than what is thought to be present. As Kevin Robins puts it, "Identities are seen to be instituted in particular social and historical contexts, to be strategic fictions, having to react to changing circumstances, and therefore subject to continuous change and reconfiguration…identities cannot be self-sufficient: they are in fact instituted through the play of differences, constituted in and through their multiple relations to other identities."[24] For the study of medieval culture, the hope is critiquing the identity politics of the past can speak to the present in an intelligible and thus meaningful way, one that can then challenge our own thinking about the pressing issues that face us now. In Anglo-Saxon studies, pioneering work has been done in this vein considering gender,[25] disability,[26] race,[27]

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[23] The term "discourse of species" is taken from Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[24] Kevin Robins, "Identity," in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 173.
[25] Stacy S. Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame

and on the complicated relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and Jews, the former imagining themselves as a new "*populus Israhel*"[28] but at the same time producing virulent anti-Judaic polemic.[29]

While this work informs my project, where mine differs is in its emphasis on the importance of nonhuman beings and objects in the construction of Anglo-Saxon subjectivity.[30] In this respect, it can be conceived of as "posthumanist," the definition of which (as with any emerging field) remains a matter of some debate. What posthumanists can agree on, though, is that most previous considerations of human identity have been anthropocentric in scope and that a reconsideration of subjectivity is needed that examines the role externalities to the body have played in its construction. The field of animal studies (also referred to at times as "human-animal

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Press, 2006).

[26] I am thinking here of the research by Christina Lee, particularly her "Body Talks: Disease and Disability in Anglo-Saxon England" in *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, ed. Jane Roberts and Leslie Webster (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2011), 145-64, and "Disability" in *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Studies*, ed. Jacqueline Stodnick and Renée R. Trilling (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 23-38.

[27] Stephen J. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[28] The foundational study is by Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), but more recent studies are Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004) and Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). See also the collection of essays in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

[29] See especially Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel* and Samantha Zacher, "The Chosen People: Spiritual Identities," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Greg Walker and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 457-77.

[30] The primatologist Frans de Waal cautions against the use of "nonhuman," which some animal studies scholars use as a synonym for "animal." He writes, "the term *nonhuman* grates on me, since it lumps millions of species together by an absence, as if they were missing something. Poor things, they are nonhuman! When students embrace this jargon in their writing, I cannot resist sarcastic corrections in the margin saying that for completeness's sake, they should add that the animals they are talking about are also nonpenguin, nonhyena, and a whole lot more" (*Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* [New York: W.W. Norton, 2016], 27-28). I have tried to avoid this term myself except in relation to the move where humans attempt to differentiate themselves from animals by rejecting any cross-species similarity and emphasizing the "nonhuman" status of a being.

studies" or "critical animal studies")[31] takes this belief as its starting point and argues that the traditional, self-contained humanist subject (i.e. the category of "human") has been historically produced by assigning to it characteristics that those beings classified as "animal" are considered incapable of possessing, a move that in the process values human life at the expense of nonhuman life. These qualities have included the possession of rationality (as we saw with Gildas above), language, a soul, an upright posture, the use of tools, and so forth. As a result of denying animals these attributes, humans have thought themselves to possess few if any ethical obligations to other forms of life, making it permissible to eat them, experiment on them, or exploit them in other ways. Believing that such distinctions between humans and animals cannot be maintained given scientific advances in the understanding of living beings and their relation to the world surrounding them,[32] critical animal studies seeks a nonanthropocentric consideration of human and animal subjectivity that will reconfigure human responses to and treatment of animals.

Animal studies in North America was galvanized by the philosophy of the utilitarian thinker Peter Singer and his groundbreaking 1975 monograph *Animal Liberation*, which detailed the exploitation of animals in farming and laboratory

[31] The meaning of these terms, of course, is always in flux, and as Matthew Calarco notes, "Critical animal studies is often distinguished from other approaches to animal issues, such as animal studies, animal ethics, and so on, with critical animal studies understood as being more explicitly and radically political and the latter approaches as modestly political or even apolitical" (*Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* [Stanford, CA: Stanford Briefs, 2015], 2.)
[32] For two recent and approachable introductions to this subject, see De Waal, *Are We Smart Enough* and Jonathan Balcombe, *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See also Donald R. Griffin, *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and the work of Marc Bekoff, such as his *Minding Animals*: *Awareness, Emotions, and Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

practices.[33] But it is the reconsideration of animal subjectivity by Jacques Derrida that has most advanced thought on the human-animal relationship by critical animal theorists, particularly Derrida's series of lectures published under the title *L'Animal que donc je suis*, or *The Animal That Therefore I Am/Follow*.[34] Derrida believes the question of the animal is one of the most pressing concerns of our time, that it "represents the limit upon which all the great questions are formed and determined, as well as all the concepts that attempt to delimit 'what is proper to man.'"[35] According to Matthew Calarco, Derrida is "is at pains to argue that binary oppositions between human beings and animals are not only empirically inaccurate but also overlook the various differences we find between and among human beings themselves and animals themselves."[36] Derrida calls for an end to the violence committed by thinking about animals in the singular—in other words, thinking of simply "the animal" as an all-encompassing category for countless species and individual members of those species—and offers the neologism "*animot*" for an alternative way of thinking about

[33] Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*, rev ed. (New York: Ecco, 2009). Singer has proven controversial for the anthropocentrism maintained by his utilitarian arguments, which seek to extend rights primarily to those animals thought to possess characteristics shared with humans. Calarco writes that "the dominant trends in our culture has never been toward respect for the species as a whole but rather for what is considered to be *quintessentially* human – and this privilege and subject position have always been available only to a small subset of the human species" (emphasis in original). This means that "when animal ethicists locate one of these quintessential human capacities (say, intentionality or subjectivity) among animals and build an ethics on that shared identity, they are not displacing anthropocentrism but are instead offering another iteration of it" (*Thinking Through Animals*, 26).
[34] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
[35] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 63.
[36] Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 105.

animals.[37] In *animot*, Derrida argues "there is no Animal in the general singular, separated from man by a single, indivisible limit. We have to envisage the existence of 'living creatures,' whose plurality cannot be assembled within the single figure of an animality that is simply opposed to humanity."[38] Instead, we should think of "the referential experience of the thing *as such*, as what it is in its being," and as a result, we better understand "the stakes involved in always seeking to draw the limit, the unique and indivisible limit to separate human from animal."[39]

The logic of sacrifice is key for understanding the privileging of the human at the expense of the animal, what Derrida has called "carnophallogocentrism."[40] In denying the animal subjectivity, humans have allowed "for a noncriminal putting to death" of both animals and those humans denied the status as subjects before the law and believed to be bestial.[41] It is "an operation as real as it is symbolic when the corpse is animal…a symbolic operation when the corpse is 'human.'"[42] This sacrifice, this putting to death, works to reify the anthropocentrism, which Derrida refers to as

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[37] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, but see especially 47-51. There are political reasons that make speaking of "the animal" (or "animal life") as a singular category expedient and necessary, especially when it comes to rights discourses and arguments for respect and humility regarding "animals" as a whole. Derrida also cautions that the idea of the *animot* "does not, of course, mean ignoring or effacing everything that separates humankind from the other animals, creating a single large set, a single grand, fundamentally homogeneous and continuous family tree going from the *animot* to the *homo* (*faber, sapiens*, or whatever else)" (Ibid., 47).
[38] Ibid., 47.
[39] Ibid., 48.
[40] Derrida first uses this term in his "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" *Cardozo Law Review* 11.5-6 (1990): 953.
[41] Jacques Derrida, "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Who Comes After the Subject?*, ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy, trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell (New York: Routledge, 1991), 112-16.
[42] Ibid., 112.

a "carnivorous virility," on whose logic it relies.[43] The "*vir*" in "virility," of course, means man, and prior conceptions of subjectivity have privileged men over women, women over animals, adults over children.[44] In summary, Derrida's idea of carnophallogocentrism, then, is not just a way of reading human-animal relations but also relations between humans and how some in and outside of human communities are denied rights, agency, justice, and so on.

Derrida's arguments about the denial of subjectivity to animals and the consequences that follow have much to say about the human-animal relationship in Anglo-Saxon England, and his thought on human responsibility towards animals is invaluable. Derrida's philosophy, however, emphasizes difference between human and animals as a quality that should generate an ethical human response to animals. As a result, his work has less to say about those instances where the human-animal boundary becomes less distinctive or even simply where the presence of animality in humans is celebrated, events that I believe we can locate throughout the culture of the Anglo-Saxons. My study of Anglo-Saxon culture is thus indebted as well to the writing of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on "becoming-animal"[45] and the application of that idea of identity formation to the reading of popular and postmodern art by Steve Baker. Deleuze and Guattari see human subjectivity as always in flux, dynamic,

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[43] Ibid., 113.
[44] Ibid., 114.
[45] This notion of "becoming-animal" first appears in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 5-7, but it is discussed in greater detail in the duo's chapter "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 232-309.

combinatory of human and animal bodies and desires. They write, "we believe in the existence of very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human."[46] Becoming-animal "does not consist in simply imitating animals or in trying somehow to jump across species boundaries but instead involves inhabiting zones of indistinction where traditional binary distinctions between human beings and animals break down."[47] Such becomings expose the fact that humans need and often *desire* the animal as a supplement to subject-formation, and as a result, these becomings work to break down the human and animal dualism assumed in metaphysics that has traditionally privileged the "human" category at the expense of the "animal" one. Baker uses Deleuze and Guattari to ask of twentieth-century advertisements, propaganda, and comics, "Why should it be that the animal, frequently conceived as the archetypal cultural 'other,' plays such a potent and vital role in the symbolic construction of human identity in such a variety of contemporary instances?"[48] He follows this up with two equally important questions: "What is the relation of these kinds of cultural representations to the circumstances of actual living animals in that same culture?" and "is the creation of a more 'positive' image for animals necessarily the most effective way forward here, or do other more oblique tactics for bringing about

[46] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 237.
[47] Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals*, 57.
[48] Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), xxxv-xxxvi.

change in public attitudes need to be explored?"[49] While literary scholars, including those working with medieval texts, have for some time explored the role of animals in human identity information, only recently have they related that work to the consideration of "actual living animals" and what if anything such practices can tell us today about our own responses to other species.

"Identifying with the Beast" examines how the Anglo-Saxons used animality in the attempt to answer questions about their own maturation as Christians, the place of violence in their warrior culture, the proper expression of sovereignty, and the nature and meaning of the saints. The Anglo-Saxons believed that God had created humans as distinct from the beasts and at times condemned those who acted like animals, but they also celebrated heroes and the holy for their animal-like behavior. As a way of approaching what is an expansive body of cultural production, I focus on the construction of a few key "personas" who filled vital social roles and frequently appear in Old English texts and material culture: the Teaching Animal, the Warrior Animal, the Sovereign Animal, and the Saintly Animal.[50] My reliance on these categories may at first glance appear to be antithetical to the poststructuralist influences I mentioned earlier, and I would agree with those who would point out that the Anglo-Saxons believed the identity of a king (in its rightful performance) and

[49] Ibid., xxxvi.

[50] I capitalize these personas as a way of acknowledging that they are to some degree artificial categories that are useful for the material I am analyzing and, while inclusive, cannot approach the totality of Anglo-Saxon experience with and response to animals and bestial humans. That said, they do give me a means to read a number of texts and objects against one another in a way that I believe will be mutually illuminating.

certainly of a saint (by definition always a rightful performance) was stable. Yet the Anglo-Saxons were well aware that both kings and saints were human and superhuman at the same time, and the best way to depict this fact was by turning to the animal. The performance of these identities would change over time, and so I analyze how the animals associated with them changed from the initial migrations to the early twelfth-century Old English poem *Durham*, which uses the presence of animals to construct an identity for the city and people who inhabited it.

We must not forget that many of the animals who figured in these human productions lived, in the flesh, alongside the Anglo-Saxons, a proximity that is in many ways foreign to our own experience. How the Anglo-Saxons treated their animal neighbors and the beliefs that informed such treatment are topics we are constantly learning more about thanks not only to the changes in thinking about subjectivity I highlighted before but also to increasing archaeological data and discoveries. To date, there have been two broad narratives advanced, particularly by nonspecialists, regarding how those in early medieval England viewed animals. The first sees the Anglo-Saxons as largely unconcerned for the well-being of the animals who surrounded them, instructed by the Bible and other Christian teaching that humans and animals were nothing alike and the latter merely a resource to be worked or slaughtered for human gain.[51] The second, in contrast, believes that early medieval

[51] For an example of this argument, see Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 5-6.

culture (especially before conversion) saw humans and animals as relatable, even if it did not go so far as to treat animals with dignity and compassion.[52] The first of these narratives is too cynical while the second perhaps too romantic. For Anglo-Saxon England, the situation on the page and on the ground (and *in* the ground, as we will see) when it came to the human-animal relationship was far more complicated than these two narratives depict.[53]

Animal imagery in Anglo-Saxon England must have made for good "infotainment," giving those who encountered it a picture of themselves and their society that would generate a powerful and lasting affective response. It was capable of producing excitement, contentment, anger, shame, and a range of other emotions, drawing on the delight and fear an audience experienced with other species. Animal imagery could therefore "entertain" both in the sense it could produce feeling but also could "engage, keep occupied the attention, thoughts, or time of (a person)."[54] It was a powerful means of delivering information in a way that could be recalled when interacting with living, breathing animals or seeing their depictions on crosses, caskets, or in manuscripts. This is not to say, however, that the meaning of an animal image was always clear or that an animal's behavior would be interpreted the same by all; instead, unraveling the idea might require some work. Some have suggested that

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[52] On this narrative, see my discussion of the scholarship of Stephen O. Glosecki below on 29.

[53] Michael D.J. Bintley and Thomas J.T. Williams remind us "it would also be an error to suggest that paganism or Christianity invariably privileged certain relationships between humans and non-humans. Christians and pagans both made use of and manipulated their environment in order to suit their own ends" (*Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, ed. Michael D.J. Bintley and Thomas J.T. Williams [Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2015], 8).

[54] *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. entertain (v.) 9a.

certain kinds of animal imagery made Anglo-Saxons think in ways they found challenging but ultimately pleasurable. Early Germanic animal art, divided by Bernhard Salin into Style I and Style II, is believed to have placed heavy interpretive demands on its medieval viewer just as it does on one seeing it today.[55] As Aleks Pluskowski notes of animals in Style I, "Body-parts are emphasized, often at the expense of completely coherent, articulated creatures, and elements, which might thus have iconic independence, could be subtracted, added or transposed to create ambiguity and unnaturalness."[56] On the other hand, "Style II animals are more balanced and integrated, markedly fluid or 'serpentine' in profile and with a strong tendency to interlace; species traits, such as those of raptors, wolves, boars, snakes and perhaps horses, appear more evident."[57] Both styles would require careful scrutiny by observers, and Pluskowski argues the purpose of such obscurity was "to absorb, puzzle or deceive a viewer."[58] The closest written equivalent to such art may have been the Anglo-Latin and Anglo-Saxon riddles that often feature animals as their likely solutions. Enjoyment would come from working through the riddles' word-play to unlock the proper meaning, but it would also derive from hearing these creatures speak as if they were human, revealing some characteristics of themselves to the witty reader. The riddles reflected a belief that the Creation and its workings were a text to

[55] Bernhard Salin, *Die altergermanische Tierornamentik* (Stockholm: Asher, 1904).
[56] Aleks Pluskowski, "Animal Magic," in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 106.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

be read and interpreted by humans to illuminate the workings of God's design and the human place in such a system.[59] This desire to read and thus master nature, however, would have serious consequences for some animals (and not just the ones on whose skin the riddles were written).

Animals and the "Syncretic" Style

To date, the study of what animals meant in early medieval England has stressed that the Anglo-Saxons possessed what is frequently called a "syncretic" culture, one that "joined Christian and 'pagan' elements in new formulas or rituals."[60] In 597, the mission sent by Gregory the Great to seek out and convert the kingdom of Æthelberht of Kent landed in Thanet. According to Bede, the wary, superstitious king insisted he meet with the mission outside, fearful that his visitors possessed sorcery of some sort that could unduly influence him.[61] It is unlikely the missionaries had magic, but they did have the power of persuasion, and shortly thereafter, Æthelberht was a Christian (though it certainly did not hurt matters that his wife, the Frankish

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[59] Patrick J. Murphy, *Unriddling the Exeter Riddles* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 25-26. For the riddles' place in Anglo-Saxon schools and other monastic contexts, see Dieter Bitterli, *Say What I Am Called: The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 24-25. While this belief in nature-as-text is expressed in the writing of Augustine, Ambrose, Isidore, and other exegetical writers, Henry Mayr-Harting believes it would have also been introduced to the Anglo-Saxons through the influence of the Irish church. He notes that an Irish belief imparted onto the Anglo-Saxons was that "there was, moreover, much greater reason to wonder at the forces of nature once it became plain to do so was not merely to satisfy the romantic inclination of man, but was also to discern with unmistaken clarity the ways of God." See Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 88.
[60] Thomas D. Hill, "The Rod of Protection and the Witches' Ride: Christian and Germanic Syncretism in Two Old English Metrical Charms," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 111 (2012): 146. For a broad discussion of syncretism in early medieval Germanic societies converted to Christianity, see Leslie Abrams, "Germanic Christianities," in *Early Medieval Christianities C.600-C.1100*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble, Julia M.H. Smith, and Roberta A. Baranowski (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 110-15. Abrams defines syncretism "as an attempt to reconcile diverse beliefs or practices" but warns against treating it simply as "a 'pick-and-mix' attitude to religious life"; at 112.
[61] *HE* I.25.

noblewoman Bertha, was already a believer).[62] The new church brought with it biblical and exegetical traditions on how to read animality, and though these writings sometimes disagreed on how any given animal and its behaviors should be interpreted, they nonetheless conceived of the human-animal relationship differently, it is thought, than the unconverted Kentish had. From 597 forward, these understandings of the similarities and differences between humans and animals would no longer evolve separately on the island, but they would also encounter other systems of belief, whether from Scandinavian contact, the Carolingian Empire, or from those Irish missionaries who sought to convert the Anglo-Saxons dwelling in the north.

The old beliefs retained some currency after the introduction of Christianity, and many have sought answers as to why. Theories have included the gradual nature of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons and their nobility, the latter taking nearly a century to complete,[63] aristocratic influence on early religious houses,[64] and the strategic decisions made by Gregory and the Anglo-Saxon church leadership at how to most readily bring those on the island into the faith. Early on in the conversion process, there appeared to be trouble, leading Gregory to advocate a hardline

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[62] For Bertha's role in the conversion of Kent, see D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 27-28.

[63] James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 77. Campbell believes that the last independent pagan kingdom to convert was on the Isle of Wight, forced to become Christian in 686 after it was invaded by Cædwalla of Wessex. See also Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 29-30.

[64] See Patrick Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," in *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers In Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede, Given at Cornell University in 1973 and 1974*, ed. Robert T. Farrell, British Archaeological Reports 46 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1978), 51-55.

response when it came to dealing with pagan practices, including animal sacrifice.[65] Writing to Æthelberht in 601, Gregory asked the king to "*solicita mente custodi, Christianam fidem in populis tibi subditis extendere festina, zelum rectitudinis tuaein eorum conversione multiplica, idolorum cultus insequere, fanorum aedificia everte*" ("seek with speed to set forth the faith of Christ to the people subject unto you, increase the zeal of your righteousness in their conversion, set yourself against the worshipping of idols, overthrow the buildings of their temples").[66] Gregory sent this letter with Mellitus, who had been dispatched from Rome to aid the leader of the mission, Augustine, but the pontiff would soften his stance shortly after and send another letter while Mellitus was on the journey to England.[67] While Gregory still required idols be destroyed, he had changed his mind on what to do with the pagan sites and the rituals that occurred at them:

> Cum vero vos Deus omnipotens ad reverendissimum virum fratrem nostrum Augustinum episcopum perduxerit, dicite ei quid diu mecum de causa Anglorum cogitans tractavi, videlicet quia fana idolorum destrui in eadem gente minime debeant, sed ipsa quae in eis sunt idola destruantur. Aqua benedicta fiat, in eisdem fanis aspergatur, altaria construantur,

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[65] *HE* I.30.

[66] *HE* I.32. The text is Epistle 11.37 in CCL 140-140A.

[67] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 64. George Demacopoulos disagrees with the traditional view, writing "that the initial letter to Ethelbert, king of Kent, identified the destruction of shrines as an example of the type of behavior that would be expected of a Christian monarch, but did not reflect a carefully constructed strategy for conversion. Thus, the letter to Ethelbert was designed for the spiritual edification of the king himself, whereas the subsequent epistle to Mellitus provided a clarification of Gregory's plan for the pagan shrines and more fully reflected the pope's syncretistic strategies for the conversion of non-Christian populations." George Demacopoulos, "Gregory the Great and the Pagan Shrines of Kent," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1.2 (2008): 353.

> reliquiae ponantur, quia si fana eadem bene constructa sunt, necesse est ut a cultu daemonum in obsequium veri Dei debeant commutari, ut dum gens ipsa eadem fana non videt destrui, de corde errorem deponat, et, Deum verum cognoscens ac adorans, ad loca quae consuevit familiarius concurrat.[68]

["When, therefore, Almighty God shall bring you to the most reverend Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have upon mature deliberation on the affair of the English, determined upon, viz. that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made and sprinkled in the said temples, let altars be erected, and relics placed. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed."]

Gregory's plan would leave the rituals but change the object of veneration. Animal sacrifices could still be seen as granting power by the native population, but that power would come directly from God rather than from the animal itself.[69] This continuity could make the church more appealing to potential converts, and in turn,

[68] *HE* I.30. This text is Epistle 11.56 in CCL 140-140A.
[69] Ibid.

those new converts who became clergy would not completely forget the old traditions.[70] These new clergymen did not give up their taste for the old stories upon founding these houses, and as Patrick Wormald writes, "the crucial line between clerical and lay, the conventional distinction between ascetic and secular standards, had become blurred at a number of points…the Anglo-Saxon Church took over many of the tastes and interests of the secular world, whether for new purposes, as in illumination, hagiography of Christian poetry, or for old, as in genealogies."[71] From such an environment, Wormald argues, sprang *Beowulf*, and from such an environment, it is likely, came a continued interest in other stories of humans who acted like animals.

My study is therefore a call to consider the human-animal relationship and the representation of animals in Anglo-Saxon England with greater care, to recognize that the responses to animals in the period were more complicated than has previously been assumed. Animals were, as Stephen O. Glosecki argued, signifiers that could "[move] from one symbol system to another, [their] image fully intact, although [their] content shifted drastically."[72] Glosecki notes how animal images adorning bracelets, amulets, helmets, and other objects could be placed on one human body before being

[70] Aristocratic families sought to join the church for the sake of piety, but there were financial reasons as well. Lands granted for the construction and maintenance of religious houses could be held in perpetuity, the only form of *bocland* ("bookland") at this point. *Bocland* did not, like other grants, leave a family's possession after the grantee's death but was hereditary. See Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 252-54. For a summary of how the concept of bookland changed in the Anglo-Saxon period, including how it shifted from an exclusively ecclesiastical granting to also a secular one, see Scott Thompson Smith, *Land and Book: Literature and Land in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 8-14.
[71] Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," 58.
[72] Glosecki, "Movable Beasts," 11.

moved to another. This physical mobility mirrors the fact that an animal could possess different, sometimes contradictory symbolic meanings, a characteristic that allowed an animal like the boar to be useful for a wide range of rhetorical purposes and to move as a symbol from Old to Middle English, Scandinavia to Anglo-Saxon England, or "from effective to affective impact."[73] Glosecki believes that "Scholars in general have been too eager to narrow this spectrum. We should rather be expanding the possibilities for likely referents of these animal signs."[74] Glosecki's point that a species is irreducible to a single meaning or interpretation, and his emphasis on the combinatory power of animal images, human bodies, and material prosthetics, is as timely as ever given recent advancements like Derrida's *animot*. Though the *animot* is in reference to "real" animals, the lessons it offers can be easily applied to the representation of them by humans—in both instances, we should respect nonhuman animals in their plurality, in their difference from us and from each other.

The State of Medieval Animal Studies

For some time, medievalists have examined animals as narrative devices in fables, bestiaries or other allegorical modes with little consideration paid to real-life animals and how the human was defined by excluding other forms of life. Thankfully, this is now changing. Studies are being released that explore the artificiality of the human-animal divide in the period and the instances where that division blurs. Joyce

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 13.

Salisbury's *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* was an important first step, but its thesis that the human-animal opposition begins to truly weaken in the twelfth century deserves closer scrutiny.[75] Furthermore, it relies on a model, as Karl Steel notes, where "humans are understood to have discrete 'animal' and 'human' parts independent of the very processes Salisbury tracks."[76] Steel's recent monograph attempts to correct this by examining how acts of violence against animals work to construct what it means to be a human. He argues that "acts of violence and of differential allocation of care…are central to distinguishing humans from animals and indeed to creating the opposing categories of human and animal" both in the present day and in the medieval period.[77] Another important study is by Susan Crane, who focuses more on nonviolent human-animal "encounters," the depiction of which in literary works she sees as "an exploratory mode that takes man and other beasts to be unsettled categories into definition through relationship."[78]

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's argument that human identity is best thought of as the product of "identity machines," an idea he derives from Deleuze and Guattari, has also been useful for rethinking the place of animals in medieval culture.[79] As Cohen notes,

> Animals similarly offered "possible bodies" to the dreamers of the

[75] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*. The first edition of Salisbury's monograph was published in 1994 but was revised in 2011.
[76] Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 12.
[77] Ibid., 14.
[78] Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 169.
[79] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2003.

> Middle Ages, forms both dynamic and disruptive through which might be dreamt alternate and even inhuman worlds. In animal flesh could be realized some potentialities for identity that might escape the constricting limits of contemporary race, gender, or sexuality. Animals were fantasy bodies through which denied enjoyments might be experienced and foreclosed potential opened for exploration.[80]

Cohen's work was among the earliest to disrupt the notion that the "human" and "animal" were stable categories in medieval thought. Instead, Cohen shows that human identities in medieval culture, most prominently that of the chivalric knight, were imagined through the combination of the human body with animals and with material objects that did not originate with that body. In a play on Deleuze and Guattari's "desiring-machines" ("*machines desirantes*"), Cohen labels these constructions "identity machines," a term he uses to argue "that the body, medieval and postmodern, becomes through these combinatory movements nonhuman, transformed via generative and boundary-breaking flux into unprecedented hybridities."[81]

A commonality among the studies I have just summarized is how little attention they pay to the early medieval period. Considerations of the human-animal relation in Anglo-Saxon England are rare and those that engage with posthumanist

[80] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Inventing with Animals in the Middle Ages," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 40.
[81] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, xiii.

thought rarer still as reading for the animal in Anglo-Saxon culture presents a number of difficulties that must be overcome. One reason is the small size of the surviving literary corpus—what's left simply has few animal encounters analogous to the sort Crane examines and little to nothing in the way of trial records, hunting and training manuals, fable collections, or bestiaries where animals, real or imagined, feature so centrally. When animals appear in the literary corpus, it is usually fleeting, as is the case with the "beasts of battle" trope, where birds (usually the raven and/or the eagle) and wolves are imagined as showing up before, during, or after a battle.[82] The animals are depicted as expressing eagerness for the slaughter that the battle will provide them, and the goal in using the image, it has been argued, is to heighten anticipation for the conflict about to occur and stress its inevitability. Given how frequently the scene appears in the corpus, critics have sought to identify a kind of standard form of the trope and have used it to judge a given poet's skill. A bad poet would use the device "mechanically"[83] as simple adornment, while a superior poet would play with its conventions to heighten the emotional response to other events occurring around

[82] For studies of this motif both in general and in specific works, see F.P. Magoun, "The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *NM* 56 (1955): 81-90; Adrien Bonjour, "*Beowulf* and the Beasts of Battle," *PMLA* 72 (1957): 563-73; Robert E. Diamond, "Theme as Ornament in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *PMLA* 76 (1961): 461-68; Allan A. Metcalf, "Ten Natural Animals in *Beowulf*," *NM* 64 (1963): 378-89; Alain Renoir, "Christ Ihesu's Beasts of Battle: A Note on Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival," *Neophilologus* 60 (1976): 455-59; Alain Renoir, "Oral-Formulaic Rhetoric: An Approach to Image and Message in Medieval Poetry," in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 234-53; John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 224-31; M.S. Griffith, "Convention and Originality in the Old English 'Beasts of Battle' Typescene," *ASE* 22 (1993): 179-99; Thomas Honegger, "Form and Function: The Beasts of Battle Revisited," *English Studies* 79 (1998): 289-98; Joseph Harris, "Beasts of Battle, North and South" in *Source of Wisdom*: *Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in Honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. Charles D. Wright, Frederick M. Biggs and Thomas N. Hall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 3-25.

[83] Honegger, "Form and Function," 293-95.

it in the poem. While the behaviors of the animals in the trope can be compared to their real-life versions,[84] little has been said about their place in the formation of human identity, a hole this study will to some degree attempt to fill.[85] Therefore, understanding the ways any given animal was thought of in Anglo-Saxon England requires not only a broad examination of the written material but also an multidisciplinary methodology, one that looks at material remains like bone deposits, grave goods, and the iconography of coins as well as manuscript illumination and carvings on caskets and crosses, traditionally the domain of archaeologists and art historians. It also helps to be familiar with the corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic for comparative purposes.[86]

In the field of Anglo-Saxon studies, the foundation for such a multidisciplinary approach to examine animal imagery and its place in the construction of human identity has been laid by the writing of Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Glosecki, Jennifer Neville, and Pluskowski. Owen-Crocker has used a variety of archaeological, artistic and literary sources, ranging from Frankish and Burgundian law to the Bayeux Tapestry, to shed light on the importance of raptorial birds and horses to the

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[84] See Eric Lacey, "Birds and Bird-Lore in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England" (unpublished dissertation, University College London, 2013), 114-19, cited by Thomas J.T. Williams, "'For the Sake of Bravado in the Wilderness': Confronting the Bestial in Anglo-Saxon Warfare," in *Representing Beasts*, 179n17.

[85] See my discussion of *Genesis A* below, 127-41.

[86] See Robert E. Bjork, "Scandinavian Relations," in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Philip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 388-99. Bjork, while admitting that no definitive evidence exists of an Old Norse text being a source for an Old English work, nonetheless argues that "a verbal echo, the resonance of a theme or genre, the seeming replication of a scene or narrative construct—if heeded—can lead to a broader understanding of an entire cultural milieu and open the way to later, unanticipated demonstrations of influence or connection that we might otherwise have missed"; at 389.

performance of nobility in late Anglo-Saxon England,[87] and she has used grave goods and Norse mythology to better understand the traditions underlying the depiction of the warriors Wulf and Eofor ("Boar") in *Beowulf*.[88] We have already encountered Glosecki, and he too was interested in this Germanic background and its leavings in Anglo-Saxon culture. In *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, he argues that mentions of animals in Anglo-Saxon poetic works whose meanings have been difficult to determine can be explained by seeing them as "reflexes" of a shamanistic society that saw animal spirits, animal bodies, and humans as capable of combining on a physical level, the animal granting man protective power and strength.[89] Before the conversion, the Anglo-Saxons practiced animism, which Glosecki defines as a belief that "sees vital essence in every creature, mortal and divine, organic and inorganic."[90] Glosecki's study, however, underestimates the role Christian models of animality had on the imaginative thought of the Anglo-Saxons, though he addressed this to some extent later with his emphasis on the "movability" of animal symbolism.[91] On the other hand, Neville's *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* is valuable for its close reading of the Anglo-Saxons' perception of their environment and the fauna that populated it, especially when it comes to the influence of classical and exegetical

[87] For Owen-Crocker's reading of the "*leofne hafoc*" that appears at the beginning of *The Battle of Maldon*, see "Hawks and Horse-Trappings: the Insignia of Rank" in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. Donald G. Scragg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 220-37. For my reading of that image, see below, 164-65.
[88] Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "Beast Men: *Wulf* and *Eofor* and the Mythic Significance of Names in *Beowulf*," in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. Stephen O. Glosecki (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 257-80.
[89] Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*.
[90] Ibid., 7.
[91] See above, 23-24.

thought.[92] As she notes, "the representation of the 'natural world' is never an end in itself and is always ancillary to other issues," and in arguing this, she may overemphasize Anglo-Saxon anthropocentrism.[93] Further, the study is limited, as Steel argues Salisbury's is, by not engaging deeply with the ruptures that emerged as medieval thinkers attempted to distinguish humans and animals. Finally, Pluskowski's work ranges more widely in its methods than the other three authors, and he has looked at written texts and archaeological data from early and late medieval Europe to illuminate the perception of a single animal, the wolf, and the wilderness it was thought to inhabit.[94] I am indebted to his thought on the role animals played in early Anglo-Saxon cosmology, especially as reflected through early Germanic art.[95]

Humanimal Identities in Early Medieval England

My study expands on this earlier work by analyzing first how the Anglo-Saxons constructed the category of the "human" by excluding what they thought was "animal" and then how this exclusion shaped both their response to animals and establishment and treatment of difference within the human community. As Cary Wolfe argues, these processes are always related:

> The effective power of the discourse of species when applied to social others of whatever sort relies, then, on a prior taking for granted of the *institution* of speciesism – that is, of the ethical acceptability of the

[92] Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[93] Ibid., 18.
[94] Aleksander Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).
[95] Pluskowski, "Animal Magic."

> systematic "noncriminal putting to death" of animals based solely on their species. And because the discourse of speciesism, once anchored in this material, institutional base, can be used to mark *any* social other, we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like animals*.[96]

In Anglo-Saxon England, such discourses of species would take many forms. They could be used to designate some animals (human or otherwise) as needing to be put to death, the "speciesism" Wolfe highlights above, but others would see being like animals as desirable and comparable to the most physically and spiritually gifted members of the community.

Chapter 1, "The Teaching Animal," looks at the figure who would be most responsible for transmitting knowledge about the mysterious natural world and what it revealed about God's plan for humankind. This chapter serves as an introduction to Anglo-Saxon thought on the human-animal distinction and the biblical and exegetical influences on their belief. While it is true that Christianity saw humans as possessing a rational soul and therefore superior in their being to animals, it also depicted humans as able to devolve willfully into a bestial form of existence. Those who chose to live sinfully appeared worse than animals, who were believed to not have the freedom to choose how they existed. As Augustine and others would argue, a knowledge of the

[96] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 7 (emphasis in original).

species who populated the Earth was not just useful but *necessary* for those seeking to shame the sinful into regaining their humanity and lead them to salvation. This learning also served the purpose of defining who the Teacher was, as a human in the world of books and wisdom capable of classifying others as animals and thus creating a hierarchical relation between teachers (humans) and their audiences (animals). For the Teacher, then, animals were not only "good to think," as Claude Levi-Strauss famously put it, but were also "good to feel."[97] Being able to interpret the "nature" ("*gecynd*") of animals granted teachers authority and affective power when addressing their audiences, and this led to the creation of a text like the *Physiologus*, a truncated version of which appears in the collection of Old English poems known as the Exeter Book. *The Panther, The Whale*, and a fragment I argue is *The Partridge* map a Christian life narrative onto the existences of three different animals. It is a Christian *bildungsroman* of a sort, one where humans are tested by animality within and without the self but eventually are able to distinguish between good and evil and achieve salvation as they mature and understand the grace of Christ. To sin is to be human, but to divert from this natural process found even among the beasts and surrender oneself completely to animal desires is to reject the order of God's design. Through its use of sensory detail, the *Old English Physiologus* places its audience within the natural world it imagines and into encounters with the panther, the whale, and the partridge. Yet this natural world has little relation to the real lives of animals and

[97] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 89.

offers a view of the human-animal relationship that only exists in the imagination. The panther is to be admired for its kindness and charity, but it is so perfect that it becomes a nonanimal. The whale, in contrast, is a hyperpredator, a killing machine who seeks to destroy humans solely for the pleasure that murder provides it. *The Panther* presents the possibility of a pan-human-animal companionship, but it defers that event by placing it far away in a foreign land and at the end of human existence. *The Whale* then reminds the audience of the danger and antagonism animals present in the current time and place.

"The Warrior Animal," the second chapter, examines how the Anglo-Saxons imagined the warrior's body and the extraordinary feats it was called upon to perform. This was frequently expressed by turning to animals or animal-like behaviors. Warriors were called upon to defend society against chaotic forces, threats often conceived of as animal, but in doing so, they acted bestial themselves. This animality, however, could be dangerous if used for the wrong reasons, and thus warriors needed to use their ferocity to benefit the community as a whole, protecting human property and space by slaughtering bestial humans and animals. Returning to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "becoming," I first look at *Beowulf* and its titular hero. His swimming contest with Breca and subsequent conflict with the animals of the sea depths becomes an exercise in reaffirming the superiority of the "human" over the "animal," but in doing so, Beowulf simultaneously blurs the distinction by "becoming-sea beast." While the whale in the *Physiologus* typifies the vileness of nature,

in *Beowulf*, the poet is drawn to what it must be like to be a creature living underwater. I then move to the "War of the Northern Kings" episode in *Genesis A*, arguing that the guerilla tactics of Abraham and his loyal troop of 318 retainers are a rare instance of "becoming-wolf" in postconversion Anglo-Saxon England. While the greed and savagery of the Elamites leads *Genesis A* to mark their criminality as lupine, the heroism of Abraham's army recalls pre-Christian traditions of wolfish warriors where the tenacity and ingenuity of the wolf was respected. Such a memory would fade as the Anglo-Saxon period progressed, but it is a belief that would have still been current and even resurgent in the eighth century, a dating proposed for the poem.[98] We have in these two poems an appreciation for wild animals but at the same time an anxiety over their ability to disrupt human agency. In these Anglo-Saxon becomings-animal, the fantasy of slaughtering real beasts and zoomorphic humans in the end serves to reassert perceived human superiority.

Chapter 3, "The Sovereign Animal," looks at how power was conceived in Anglo-Saxon England in part as the ability to regulate animal life on an expansive scale. Kings were able to demand the mass slaughter of predatory animals, produce laws that controlled the value and exchange of domesticates, and require subjects to provide and train animals for the ruler's purposes. At the same time, however, the omnipresence and control over large spaces that sovereignty needed to display meant it was frequently associated with animality, both in its proper and improper

[98] See below, 138-39.

expression. Derrida has explicated this construction of sovereignty against and as animality in his series of lectures titled *The Beast and the Sovereign.*[99] Though his focus rarely turns to the medieval period, his idea of sovereignty as prosthetic and as, like animals, existing outside the law can help us to better understand those depictions of sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon England where animals feature prominently. The Anglo-Saxons, like several of the cultures that Derrida analyzes, depicted those rulers who abused their power as wolves, a move we see in poems like *Deor* and *Daniel* as well as in the homilies of Ælfric. The proper form of sovereignty, though, became linked to two companion animals of the nobility: the semi-domesticated hawk and the fully domesticated horse. Along with the dog, they were the animals most associated with hunting. Equally as important, they generated continuity between the Anglo-Saxons' Germanic past and new Roman Christianity. I read this belief in the depiction of Constantine the Great in the Old English poem *Elene*. Constantine is imagined as a sort of proto-Anglo-Saxon horse lord but one allied with both an animal and holy power, an assemblage that allows for the founding of a Christian empire and, eventually, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons themselves. In the hawk and the horse, then, we see a form of appreciation and desire for another animal that offers the possibility of an affirmative relationship with a beast rather than necessitating its sacrifice.

[99] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign,* 2 vols., ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009-2011).

The fourth and final chapter is "The Saintly Animal." After Christ, there were no humans on Earth holier than the saints, but the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed stories of saints who existed in the border between animal and human, whether it was Mary of Egypt's naked, bestial existence in the desert or a being who possessed a canine head like Christopher, a member of the cynocephali and the focus of this chapter. While the figure of Christopher (and the cynocephalus more generally) was derived from a hodgepodge of ancient and classical sources, I argue the saint's popularity persisted in part thanks to his closeness to dogs, arguably the most "movable" of animals in Christian thinking. The dog, as immediate to an Anglo-Saxon as any other animal, could be celebrated as a close companion and protector, but it was also maligned for its filthiness and gluttony. This loyalty could reflect the relationship believed to exist between saint and believer, but the dog's negative qualities made it also like a sinning human. *The Passion of Saint Christopher*, several versions of which were circulating in Anglo-Saxon England (and perhaps with eighth-century Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent), marks on the saintly body itself the internal struggle of a Christian against his or her animality and shows that any human creature, no matter how base, can change its life and be saved. The negative canine traits to be overcome stress the power of Christopher's conversion, but the loyalty and protection he provides once that occurs celebrates the place and usefulness of dogs in the human community. I then conclude this study with a few brief remarks on where I believe studies of the human-animal relationship in Anglo-Saxon England will turn and on what the early

medieval period offers to the field of animal studies as a whole.

CHAPTER 1

THE TEACHING ANIMAL

"We cannot fully know ourselves without first knowing the nature of all living creatures.[1] Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the late fourth century, delivered these words in the sixth of his nine sermons on the Creation now known collectively as the *Hexaemeron*. They were aimed at those skeptics in his congregation who believed there was little value in learning about animal life. If God had created man superior to animals, they argued, why think about these beasts when what it meant to be human was not fully understood? Were there not more important matters to spend one's time on?

The bishop's response was that people often did not act as if they were superior to the beasts. While it was true that humans had been gifted with rational souls that gave them the freedom to decide how they lived, they shared a weakness of the flesh with animals, a susceptibility that could cause their submission to carnal

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[1] *Hexaemeron* VI.2.3. The full passage reads,

> Audio enim iamdudum aliquos insusurrare dicentes: "Quamdiu aliena discimus et nostra nescimus, quamdiu de reliquis animantibus docemur scientiam et nosmet ipsos ignoramus? Illud dicat quod mihi prosit, ut me nouerim ipsum." Et iusta est conquestio, sed ordo seruandus est, quem scriptura contexuit, simul quia non possumus plenius nos cognoscere, nisi prius quae sit omnium natura animantium cognouerimus.

["I already hear some who murmur and say, 'How much time are we to spend discussing manners alien to us, while knowing nothing of what really concerns us? How long are we to learn of other living creatures while we do not know ourselves? Let him tell me what is to be for my benefit, that I may know myself.' That is a just complaint. The order which scripture laid down must, however, be retained. We cannot fully know ourselves without first knowing the nature of all living creatures."]

desires and lead to eternal damnation. Animals, in contrast, had no choice in how they acted. They were believed to live almost mechanistically, their behaviors designed and regulated by the Maker to give the world balance and stability but also to serve as examples for humans. God had ensured that "*simplex ferarum natura est, nescit veritatis calumnias*" ("wild creatures have a nature that is simple and one which has no concern in the perversion of truth."), and this transparency, this inability to deceive, allowed them to be impactful analogies for preachers like Ambrose.[2] For example, he could argue that the relationship of the sea-murena and the viper modeled the characteristics of a successful marriage, namely a wife's ability to endure a husband's faults.[3] On the other hand, these animals could exhibit some behaviors to avoid, such as the tendency of poisonous snakes to bite. Instead of lashing out, a husband should seek to purge his venom as some vipers did, which was a fancy way of saying he should be more agreeable.[4] What Ambrose's naysayers appeared to not recognize was that his animal lore always had an anthropocentric purpose. Ambrose had been accused of ignoring the perceived gap that existed between human and animal, yet his sermons were actually attempting to maintain it, to teach humans to live in a way that proved they were superior to the beasts and worthy of heaven.

However, there was another problem. Unlike these skeptics, there were some in Ambrose's audience who enjoyed his colorful anecdotes of animal behavior a little

[2] *Hexaemeron* VI.4.22.
[3] *Hexaemeron* V.7.18.
[4] *Hexaemeron* V.7.18.

too much. Ambrose's hexaemeral sermons had resulted in him being considered an expert in natural lore, which in turn helped establish his authority as an interpreter of scripture. What troubled the bishop, though, was that these followers asked him about animals (usually those in exotic, far-off lands) and their behaviors but not about the moral lessons they imparted. When his congregation thought in this manner and animals became interesting for their own sake, their usefulness as rhetorical tools lessened, and despite the bishop's attempt to convince these folks to focus on improving themselves, such a response to Ambrose's preaching would continue long after his death. A ninth-century commentator on Ambrose, Notker Balbulus (i.e. Notker the Stammerer), would remark in his *Notatio de illustribus viris*, "If you delight in the beauty of creatures you should keep going back to the *Hexaemeron* of Ambrose, just for fun."[5]

The benefits of using animal imagery ultimately outweighed such a concern, though, and the Anglo-Saxons followed Ambrose in understanding the persuasive force animal behavior could hold for public speakers. The most notable example of this may be the famous story from Bede's *Historia* about the day Edwin, king of Northumbria, finally decided to convert. Book II of the *Historia* depicts Edwin as thinking long and hard about whether to become a Christian, surviving an assassination attempt and narrowly avoiding betrayal by Rædwald of East Anglia.

[5] PL 131: 995A. The Latin reads, "*Si creaturarum pulchritudine delectaris, Exaemeron Ambrosii, ut jocularis es, pro ludo relegere consuescas.*" The translation is by John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London: Longman, 1999), 213-14.

Despite the miraculous interventions that saved him, the king still deliberated, but he was finally moved to accept the new faith after hearing impassioned speeches by the pagan priest Coifi and an unnamed retainer, the latter who memorably compared the human condition to the flight of a sparrow in and out of a hall on a stormy winter evening.[6] Man's life is fleeting, the retainer points out, and he is ignorant of what came before he was born and what will come after. The pagan existence is like the sparrow's time in the hall, which allows the bird to escape the winter storms, the chaos and intemperance of the natural world, for only the briefest time. Christianity held the promise of a warm, eternal stay in the heavenly dwelling.

The vividness of this image helped convince Edwin to finally accept the faith. It is unlikely the sparrow simile actually originated with the retainer, as a great deal of evidence suggests Bede was putting biblical language into the counselor's mouth, but in any event, it is proof the Anglo-Saxons understood the power animal images could

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[6] *HE* II.13. The passage reads:

> Mihi videtur, rex, vita hominum praesens in terries, ad conparationem eius, quod nobis incertum est, temporis, quale cum te residente ad caenam cum ducibus ac ministries tuis tempore brumali, accenso quidem foco in medio, et calido effecto caenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluviarum vel nivium, adveniens unus passerum domum ervolaverit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit. Ipso quidem tempore, quo intus est, hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed tamen parvissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excurso, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens, tuis oculis elabitur. Ita haec vita hominum ad modicum apparet; quid autem sequatar, quidue praecesserit, prorsus ignoramus. Unde si haec nova doctrina certius aliquid attulit, merito esse sequenda videtur.

["Your majesty, when we compare the present life of man on earth with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems to me like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting-hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter's day with your thegns and counsellors. In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it."]

have in changing human behavior.[7] The retainer (and Bede), like Ambrose, saw the natural world anthropocentrically as an instructive text that could be read to better understand human existence and that its imagery could deeply impact an audience. Furthermore, if those who accepted the faith that day held a belief in animism, as some have argued, then the idea that animals held mysteries for man to discover would have been a familiar one to the Northumbrians and shared by the Christians seeking to convert them.[8]

This chapter analyzes how Anglo-Saxon imaginative thinkers used animal lore to shape the thought and behavior of their audiences and at the same time construct their own roles as teachers. While other chapters look at how animality was necessary for the formation of warrior, sovereign, and saintly identities, my interest here is in those everyday folks who prayed and those who taught them. There are a number of terms that could be used to name the deliverer of natural lore—preacher and *pastor* come to mind—but I have chosen the term "Teacher" for its inclusivity given the difficulty in determining the exact circumstances of how Old English texts were received by their audiences.[9] When animals appear in works by Bede ("*se æglæca*

[7] M.J. Toswell has argued that a number of biblical passages may lay behind the sparrow simile, especially Psalms 83.4 and 101.8 but also Psalms 10.2 and 123.7, Matthew 10.29 and Luke 12.6. See "Bede's Sparrow and the Psalter in Anglo-Saxon England," *ANQ* 13.1 [2000]: 7-12. For a discussion of the homiletic rhetoric in the Edwin story, see Samantha Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), xix-xxiv.

[8] For a discussion of the Anglo-Saxons as an animistic society before the conversion, see Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, especially 7-9 and 181-210.

[9] On the difficulty of determining preaching contexts and audience makeup in Anglo-Saxon England, see Charles D. Wright "Vercelli Homilies XI-XIII and the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform: Tailored Sources and Implied Audiences," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 203-28. Mary Swan discusses the preacher-audience relationship more generally in "Constructing Preacher and Audience in Old English Homilies,"

lareow," "the marvelous teacher," Byrhtferth of Ramsey called him), Alfred, and Ælfric, to name a few noted teachers, they are meant to define how properly to be human.[10] Most often, this was taught by stressing the perceived superiority of humans over animals, the teacher arguing that acting like beasts was against so-called human "nature." On other occasions, animal behaviors were portrayed as exemplary in some way that could be imitated (not literally, of course), with the meaning behind animals' actions and extraordinary bodies interpreted for an audience by one with knowledge of natural lore.

I begin this study of the animal and the Teacher by looking at how Anglo-Saxons explained the human-animal divide to their audiences and the classical and exegetical influences that shaped their teaching on this subject. The freedom and thus agency that humans possessed as rational beings was a mighty privilege but dangerous, giving them the ability to earn eternal rewards but also to sin in a way that could make them *appear* a lesser creature than animals and lead to eternal damnation. The goal of the Teacher was to use animality in a way that would generate a range of emotional responses, both pleasurable and painful, and would lead to more human-like behavior. Mary Swan has noted how preaching, a form of teaching, grants the homilist a "superior power," but this power demanded the active cooperation of an audience. She argues that the "preacher's voice is meaningless – has no impact; affects and

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Constructing the Medieval Sermon, ed. Roger Andersson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 177-88.

[10] The mention of Bede as "se æglæca lareow" appears in the *Enchiridion* II.1.175, which has been most recently edited as *Byrhtferth's Enchiridion*, ed. Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, EETS S.S. 15 (Oxford: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1995). The translation of "*æglæca*" as "marvelous" is by Baker and Lapidge.

effects nothing – without the presence and cooperation of an audience."[11] I believe the same can be said for didactic works more generally including those in verse, whether performed orally or read to oneself in a contemplative setting. Animal lore was a potent means of acquiring this "presence and cooperation," and I look at how this is gained in three poems that, like a sermon, construct their audience and generate an affective response. *The Panther, The Whale*, and *The Partridge*, the *Old English Physiologus*, are imagined as a communal experience, one where the audience's journey in learning about the natural world mirrors the self-knowledge a Christian must gain before achieving salvation. The three poems use their animals' imaginative appeal to instruct their audience on the vigilance needed to protect the self against sin and the consequences of failing to do so. In doing so, however, they construct a picture of the human-animal relationship that is at once fantastical and frightening, welcoming and alienating.

Anglo-Saxon Attitudes about Animals

When determining what characteristics separated humans and animals, Anglo-Saxons often turned to the writing of the Church Fathers for inspiration. Classical thinkers and some of the earliest Christian writers had engaged in vigorous debates as to whether animals possessed reason and how humans should treat animal life. How did animals relate to the world? Was it wrong to make them labor to their deaths? Should

[11] Swan, "Constructing Preacher and Audience," 179.

they be eaten?[12] Questions like these about the being and permissible treatment of animals appear largely settled in the writings of Ambrose and Augustine, the latter of whom Bede quotes often in his own hexaemeral exegesis.[13] As Richard Sorabji argues, Western Christianity largely adopted the Stoic position that animals lacked reason and thus should be excluded from any sort of community with humans.[14] Animals did not merit justice, making it permissible for humans to control and kill them; they had been designed by the Maker as a resource for man to exploit.[15] While animals were superior to the lifeless rocks and senseless plants due to their sensory perception, they did not possess the rationality and eternal souls of man and the angels, a hierarchy that eventually became known as the "Great Chain of Being."[16]

Rationality granted humans a knowledge of the self and freedom that no other fleshly being on Earth possessed. They were able (or at least should be able) to understand that God had made man better than the beasts; in other words, they had

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[12] The secondary literature on these debates is large and steadily growing, but see especially Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 64-70. See also Catherine Osborne, *Dumb Beasts and Dead Philosophers: Humanity and the Humane in Ancient Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 224-238. Stephen T. Newmyer helpfully collects a number of primary texts for this debate in *Animals in Greek and Roman Thought: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 97-108.

[13]As Dabney Anderson Bankert, Jessica Wegmann, and Charles D. Wright point out, "Despite Ambrose's…widely acknowledged status as an orthodox authority and interpreter of Scripture, his writings were much less influential in Anglo-Saxon England than those of Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory" (*Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England with Pseudo-Ambrose and Ambrosiaster*, Old English Newsletter Subsidia 25 [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1997], 11-12).

[14] Sorabji, in *Animal Minds*, traces the debate on animal perception back to the philosophy of Pythagoras (570-495 BCE) and the poetry of Hesiod (believed to have lived in the 8th Century BCE), but the most vigorous arguments positing the difference between man and animal came from Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Epicureans. Sorabji notes that while "Aristotle...was driven almost entirely by scientific interest in reaching his decision that animals lack reason," other philosophers, like the Stoics, "denied justice to animals, on the grounds that animals lack reason. The Stoics further saw animals as providentially designed for us," a viewpoint they shared with the Bible and that influenced later Judeo-Christian authors; at 2. See also Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 38-40.

[15] Gillian Clark, "The Fathers and the Animals: The Rule of Reason?" in *Animals on the Agenda: Questions about Animals for Theology and Ethics*, ed. Andrew Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 75.

[16] Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 264.

the ability to taxonomize, a quality we see performed in the Genesis narrative of Adam naming the animals.[17] Bede, quoting Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manicheos* [*DGCM*], believed that God wanted to teach man how to differentiate himself from the beasts when he asked Adam to give the animals names:

> Causa autem adducendi ad Adam cuncta animantia terrae et volatilia caeli, ut videret quid ea vocaret, et eis nomina imponeret, haec est, ut sic demonstraret deus hominis quanto melior esset omnibus irrationabilibus animantibus. Ex hoc enim apparet ipsa ratione hominem meliorem esse quam pecora, quod distinguere et nominatim ea discernere non nisi ratio potest quae melior est.[18]

["The reason for bringing all the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven to Adam for God to see what he would call them and what names he would give them is

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[17] This scene is depicted on London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv, f.6r as part of a work commonly known as the illustrated *Old English Hexateuch*. For a discussion of this image, see Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 84 (Fig. 5.1).

[18] The text is from *In Genesim,* CCSL 118A [PL 91]. References to this work will be by book, chapter and line, here 1.2.1769-75. All translations of *In Genesim* are from *On Genesis*, trans. Calvin B. Kendall (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008) and will be referred to by page number, here 121-22. The borrowing from Augustine (*DGCM* II.11.16, in PL 34) was noted by Charles W. Jones, "Some Introductory Remarks on Bede's Commentary on Genesis," *Sacris Erudiri* 19 (1969-70): 118, and cited by Kendall, *On Genesis*, 122n60. References to *DGCM* will be by book, chapter, and section. The passage from Augustine reads,

> Primo ergo demonstravit Deus homini quanto melior esset pecoribus, et omnibus irrationabilibus animantibus: et hoc significant quod dictum est, adducta esse ad illum omnia animantia, ut videret quid ea vocaret, et eis nomina imponeret. Ex hoc enim apparet ipsa ratione hominem meliorem esse quam pecora, quod distinguere et nominatim ea discernere, nonnisi ratio potest, quae de ipsis judicat.

["So first of all, then, God demonstrated to the man how much better he was than cattle, and all brute animals; and this is the meaning of what it says next, that all the animals were brought to him, for him to see what to call them, and to label them with their names. This, you see, shows that man is better, in virtue of his rationality, than the beasts, because to distinguish them and differentiate between them by naming them is something only reason can do by making a judgment about them.]

All translations of *DGCM* are from *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002).

this, that in this way God might demonstrate to man how much better he was than all the animals lacking reason. For from this it is clear that man by virtue of that reason is better than the beasts, because only reason, which is better, can distinguish and set them apart by name."]

Animals, lacking the ability to know their own natures or relation to one another, could not identify themselves, and a name, as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* attests, imparted useful information about the creature being named.[19] Man alone had the capability to know what he was and how he related to rest of the *gesceaft* ("creation"), a distinction that would later be explained by Alfred in his Old English translation of Boethius.[20] It was a difference that influenced Martin Heidegger's argument that the possession of "world" (or, more accurately, the amount of "world" possessed) separated man from animal. Heidegger's infamous proclamation that "the stone (material object) is *worldless*…the animal is *poor in world*…man is *world-forming*" saw animals as incapable of accessing the "being" of other beings "as such," as capable

[19]At the beginning of Book XII, "*De animalibus*" ("On Animals") of the *Etymologiae* (CPL 1186), Isidore notes that "Omnibus animantibus Adam primum vocabula indidit, appellans unicuique nomen ex praesenti institutione iuxta condicionem naturae cui serviret" ("Adam was the first to confer names on all the animals, assigning a name to each one at the moment of its creation, according to the position in nature that it holds"). All quotations of Isidore are cited by book, chapter, and paragraph, here XII.i.1. Translations are from *The 'Etymologies' of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[20] In Prose 7, Wisdom and Reason address Mind, saying, "Þæs menniscan lifes gecynd is þæt hi þy anan sien beforan eallum oðrum gesceaftum þy hi hie selfe ongiton hwæt hie sien and hwonan hi sien; and þi hi sint wyrsan þonne nytena þy hi nellað witan hwæt hi sint oðde hwonan hi sint" ["The nature of human life is that they (humans) alone are above all other creatures because they themselves know what they are and from where they are; and they are worse than the beasts because they are unwilling to know what they are or where they are."]. All quotations from the Old English Boethius are from the version of the C-text edited in *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 and references will be by page number; at 412. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Old English are my own.

only of instinctually responding to external stimuli presented by their environment.[21] Matthew Calarco notes, "What the animal has, positively, is a certain openness toward beings; what it lacks, negatively, is the capacity to encounter beings in their manifestness, in their being, a capacity that is, for Heidegger at least, unique to human *Dasein*."[22]

Humans' rationality also granted them what Alfred calls "*friodom*" (*DOE* "freedom of will, thought, the quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity"). In a discussion in Prose 31 on whether humans have free will, Wisdom tells Boethius that "*Nis nan gesceaft þe hæbbe friodom and gesceadwisnesse buton englum and monnum*" ("There is no creature who has freedom and rationality but angels and men").[23] The problem, however, was that people abused this privilege. While this freedom meant they could choose to believe and live eternally, it also made them, along with the rebellious angels, the only creatures who acted against God's will; animals, lacking freedom, could not. Their behavior was attributed to God's design, and the responsibility for interpreting that behavior was a task for those who were capable of reading animals' place in the text God had written. The denial of freedom to animals made them effective symbols. As Gillian Clark notes, their actions were "not presented either as a conscious choice to do right or…as an effortless and

[21] Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude,* trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 177.
[22] Matthew Calarco, "Heidegger's Zoontology," in *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London: Continuum, 2004), 28.
[23] *Old English Boethius*, 533.

uncorrupted instinct."[24] Humans alone had morality, and animals, no matter how honorable their actions seemed, would always be lesser creatures.

Augustine, Bede, and Alfred believed it was their duty to guide their charges in using human freedom to avoid sin. We have seen how Ambrose employed animals as models for his congregation to follow, with the logic being that humans, as moral creatures, should choose to behave better.[25] While positive exemplars can be found from time to time in his writing,[26] reading Augustine's work gives the impression that his favored means of instructing with animal imagery was to invoke the human-animal distinction in order to shame his audience. He points out that animal-like behavior in humans is a devolution, a conscious rejection of the rationality that had been gifted to them, writing that "*Illa est difficilis ratio, qua intelligit in seipso aliud esse rationale quod regit, aliud animale quod regitur*" ("The difficult step for reason is for us to realize that in ourselves the rational power which should govern is one thing, the 'animal' power [appetite or desire] which should be governed by it, another").[27] While this argument upholds the idea that an impenetrable gap exists between humans and animals, it acknowledges that this difference can *appear* to collapse if humans do not protect themselves against the animal desires stalking inside them.

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[24] Clark, "The Fathers and the Animals," 70. Further, Susan Crane mentions how animals "[could] have an inborn virtuousness (turtledove and phoenix, for example) or an inborn viciousness (fox and wolf, for example), but this innate virtue or vice [was] not subject to revision" (*Animal Encounters*, 36).
[25] See above, 38-40.
[26] An example is Augustine's discussion on the characteristics of the snake in Book II.59-60 of his *De Doctrina Christiana.* He highlights there how snakes defend themselves by exposing their bodies to attackers rather than their heads, which he believes should teach Christians the wisdom in allowing persecutors to torture their bodies but not deprive them of the faith. The passage appears in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 82-85.
[27] *DGCM* II.11.16.

Man's decision to sin and expulsion from Eden ended humanity's control over animal life and control over its own animal-like desires. Because many in the flock were incapable of resisting fleshly urges, it was up to those who recognized this bestial behavior to shame sinners, to "domesticate" them. Augustine makes this point in *De Genesi ad litteram* [*DGAL*] in a discussion on whether human souls can enter animals and vice versa. Some of Augustine's colleagues have attributed this belief to classical philosophers, but he argues that these forbearers were speaking of a metaphoric rather than literal transformation, and he recognizes the utility of such a belief for Christian teachers:

> Unde proclivius et ipse crediderim, quod etiam eorum posteri sectatores, illos homines qui haec primitus in suis libris posuerunt, in hac vita potius intellegi voluisse, quadam perversitate morum ac turpitudine homines pecorum similes fieri, ac sic quodammodo in pecora commutari, ut hoc dedecore objecto, eos a cupiditatum pravitate revocarent.

["So I myself am more inclined to believe what their later followers also say, that those men who originally proposed these ideas in their books intended it rather to be understood that people become like brute beasts in this life by any kind of perverse and shameful behavior, and thus are changed after a fashion into brute beasts; and that they hoped by thrusting the disgrace of it in this way under their very noses to

recall them from the depravity of their lusts and ambitions"].[28]

Those who could best point out this animality in others were akin to trainers who tamed cattle, using physical force to guide the animals when needed but treating them kindly at other times. In doing so, they could transform these metaphorical beasts back into their natural, human selves, the process that Gildas saw as absent in his chaotic Britain. By constructing the human-animal distinction in this way, Augustine simultaneously created a human-human distinction, a hierarchy where privileged and learned men such as himself, who had the sort of self-knowledge these human "animals" lacked, were needed to control those beings who surrendered their humanity to bodily pleasures.

Those who sinned in an egregious manner or who ignored such admonishment altogether were thought of as harmful to Christian society, as beasts within, dangers not only to themselves but the community around them. Because of this, they could see themselves animalized and then excluded from that community. Prose 26 of the Alfred Boethius contains a memorable catalogue of humans who acted like animals, comparing robbers to wolves, the deceitful to foxes, and the slothful to asses, to list a few examples.[29] The sinners identified in this passage had turned "*from goode to yfel*" ("from good to evil"). In doing so, they surrendered their humanity, a point Wisdom drives home by repeatedly encouraging Boethius not to call the offending party a

[28] *DGAL* VII.10.15; PL 34. References to *DGAL* are by book, chapter, and section. The translation is by Hill, *On Genesis*.
[29] *Old English Boethius*, 504.

"*man*."[30] The expansiveness of the sins associated with animality is striking. Included are transgressions involving "pleasures of the body" ("*lichoman lustum*"), violence against others (by "*þone reðan,*" or "the cruel"), and various defects in character (such as the "*þæm ungestaððegan,*" "the unstable"), each represented by a specific animal.[31] By comparing sinners to animals, these thinkers protected not only themselves but also their communities and humanity as a whole.

Introducing *The Old English Physiologus*

The rhetorical force gained from relating human to animal behavior is best illustrated in the Anglo-Saxon corpus by the Exeter Book's *Physiologus* texts. The roots of the *Physiologus* go back thousands of years before *The Panther, The Whale*, and the fragment believed to be *The Partridge* were produced, to the ancient folklore and mythology of India and Egypt and then to writing in ancient Hebrew.[32] Although the creator of the *Physiologus* has never been conclusively identified (and was once even thought to be Ambrose), its allegorical methods, as well as the fact that the earliest circulating copies were in Greek, seem to point to an origin in Alexandria in the second or third century CE.[33] The structure of a typical *Physiologus* entry changed little as the work moved between regions and languages, each entry consisting of a natural description of an animal's behavior (though some entries feature rocks and plants) followed by an

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Michael J. Curley, *Physiologus* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), ix. As Curley notes, the name "Physiologus" was not originally intended to refer to the work itself but rather to a figure who instructs the audience about the mysteries of the natural world. This chapter then is quite literally about an Anglo-Saxon "Physiologus."
[33] Ann Squires, *The Old English Physiologus* (Durham: University of Durham Press, 1988), 14-15. See also Curley, *Physiologus*, xvi-xvii.

allegorical interpretation based on scripture. Latin translations appear to have been made as early as the fourth century, and it is likely Ambrose was familiar with the work in some fashion.[34]

The exact source of the Old English version is unclear, but similarities have been traced between elements in the Anglo-Saxon and those from two Latin traditions known as "Y" and "B." While the comparison of the panther's fur to Joseph's famous coat is only in Y, the description of the whale found in the Exeter Book is closest to B, leaving the matter unsettled.[35] Dating the *Old English Physiologus*, like with so many other Anglo-Saxon poems, has also been tentative. Ker placed it contemporary with the Exeter Book's production in the second half of the tenth century,[36] but Kenneth Sisam identified its language as influenced by Alfredian texts, dating the work between the late ninth and middle of the tenth centuries.[37] Michael D.C. Drout has suggested that the poem may reflect the reformist zeal of the tenth century's Benedictine Reform, but one wonders if the *Old English Physiologus* had been circulating in Anglo-Saxon England in some form much earlier, even in the time of Archbishop Theodore, who brought a knowledge and love of natural lore acquired from his time in Tarsus.[38] Ann Squires, though, concludes, "There seems little

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[34] Curley, *Physiologus*, xix.
[35] There are also textual traditions known as "C" and "A" dating to the ninth and tenth centuries, respectively, but Squires points out the Old English poems are unlikely to derive from them. The whale does not appear in A, and the two natures of the whale are in a different order in C (similar to the Greek) than in Y, B, or the Old English. See Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 21.
[36] N.R. Ker, "Review of Facsimile Edition," *Medium Aevum* 2 (1933): 229-30.
[37] Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 108.
[38] Regarding Theodore's influence on the Anglo-Saxons, Mayr-Harting writes, 'To these people with their cows and

possibility of dating the *Physiologus* poems beyond the obvious fact that they were in existence by the period of this hypothetical first copy."[39]

Just as inconclusive have been debates over the identity of the animal in the third poem. The final poem is typically edited as two fragments with a lacuna in the middle, and some have suggested these parts are unrelated.[40] The first of these fragments indicates its subject only as "*sumum fugle*" ("a certain bird").[41] It was the German critic K.W.A. Ebert who in 1883 identified the bird as the partridge, basing his argument on the fact that a Latin version of the *Physiologus* in Bern, Burgerbibliothek MS. 233 features the same panther-whale-partridge order as the Old English.[42] More recently, Frederick M. Biggs has sought to add more evidence to the partridge theory. Biggs argues that the final fragment differs from the moral gloss of the Latin source because the Anglo-Saxon poet has included eschatological motifs and thus makes the conclusion of the work similar to other Old English poems that end with references to the Last Judgment.[43] Among these associations are the linkage of

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sheep, their barley and lentils, this vigorous old man presented, at first-hand, arresting pictures of exotic animals and foods, of deserts and mountain crevasses, of cities with strange names operating unheard of punishments" (*Coming of Christianity*, 209). While Mayr-Harting is describing Theodore's skill with biblical imagery, it's also possible he could have brought with him experience with animal lore like that depicted in the *Physiologus*, though this must remain only speculative given the available evidence. The only Latin *Physiologus* manuscript in Anglo-Saxon England identified by Lapidge dates to the beginning of the tenth century. See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 341.

[39] Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 5.

[40] See Patrick Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993), 104-105.

[41] The text of the *Old English Physiologus* used here is from *Old English Shorter Poems Volume I: Religious and Didactic*, ed. and trans. Christopher A. Jones, DOML 15 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[42] K.W.A. Ebert, "Der angelsachsiche *Physiologus*," *Anglia* 6 (1883): 241-47.

[43] Frederick M. Biggs, "The Eschatological Conclusion of the Old English *Physiologus*," *Medium Aevum* 58 (1989): 286-97; at 286. Biggs' most convincing point that it refers to the partridge may be the latter fragment's use of the word "*siblufu*," which means something like "love between kinsmen" or "love of kinsmen." As he notes, "This word would be appropriate especially if the poem had described the partridge, whose major characteristic in the *Physiologus* is that it hatches the eggs of other birds, but then is abandoned when the mature chicks return to their real parents"; at 293.

the partridge to the Apocalypse and the Antichrist, and Biggs locates similar moves in Jerome, Hrabanus Maurus, and Pseudo-Ephraem. This, Biggs writes, "may have led the author of the Old English *Physiologus* to develop the moral conclusion of the 'Partridge' into an explicitly eschatological statement."[44]

Drout does not believe the bird is a partridge, however. He argues that the poem is talking about the phoenix, noting, "the structure of the *Physiologus* cycle makes more sense if the bird is a phoenix."[45] In his view, "*The Panther* [represents] Christ, or Christ's death, *The Whale*, the devil or the descent into hell, and the bird poem, Christ's or man's resurrection. The appearance of a marvelous odor in the other two *Physiologus* poems suggests that such an odor would have appeared in the third, also supporting the phoenix as the identity of the bird."[46] As we will see shortly, I disagree with Drout's theory and believe the structure of the *Physiologus* fits traditions surrounding the partridge more closely than the phoenix.

Squires, in her edition of the *Old English Physiologus*, writes that "The three poems have a formal unity and a completeness in the manuscript which make it impossible to argue that the Exeter Book scribe (or his predecessor) has anthologized

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[44] Ibid., 294.

[45] Michael D.C. Drout, "'The Partridge' is a Phoenix: Revising the Exeter Book *Physiologus*," *Neophilologus* 91 (2007): 487-503. Drout writes, "The applicability of the *stenc* topos to the phoenix (and the presence of the *stenc* topos in the existing Anglo-Saxon 'Phoenix' poem), the bird's traditional typological and anagogical interpretation, and the phoenix's utility in collapsing the four elements into a three-part cycle (by combining air and fire) all support the argument for the phoenix as the bird"; at 501. A rebuttal was made a year later by Valentine A. Pakis ("A Note in Defense of *The Partridge*," *Neophilologus* 92 [2008]: 729-34), who argues that "the traditionally proposed sequence of the Old English poems – panther, whale, partridge – is far more probable than Drout has led his readers to believe," citing Greek, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Latin and Old Icelandic versions where this ordering is used; at 731.

[46] Drout, "'Partridge' is a Phoenix," 487.

merely a section of a longer work."[47] Thomas P. Campbell, in arguing for a homiletic approach in the work, has stated its subject is "salvation."[48] However, we can take Campbell's thought a step further and say that the poems are about the "vigilance" required to achieve salvation, about conquering sin and recognizing God's grace in guiding man on the way to heaven. The three poems are also corrective. By showing how this path is written into the workings of the natural world, it presents deviation from that path as against nature, against one's own humanity. As we saw in the Old English Boethius, to surrender humanity in such a way was harmful to the community, and the *Old English Physiologus* emphasizes the idea that man has agency in deciding whether to dwell in Christ's or Satan's community. The devilish whale figure may represent malignancy on a seemingly unfathomable scale, but it, like any other animal, is conquerable, and man is free in deciding whether to resist it or not. The *Old English Physiologus* is a good start, then, for determining the ways animality was used to define the human, modify behavior, and entertain through the imagined behaviors of beasts.

"It's the Colors You Have": *The Panther* and Animal Perfected

The *Old English Physiologus* begins with an animal that, in many ways, is not very much like an animal at all. The panther is so idealized that it becomes almost nonanimal, defying many of the characteristics that in Christian thought, as we have seen,

[47] Squires*, Old English Physiologus*, 23. Early critics had argued that the Anglo-Saxon version of the *Physiologus* contained many more entries. See Ebert, "Der angelsachsiche *Physiologus*," 241-43.
[48] Thomas P. Campbell, "Thematic Unity in the *Old English Physiologus*," *ASNSL* 215 (1978): 73-79.

differentiated man from beast. Early on, the poem refers to the panther as an "*anstapa*" (a hapax the *DOE* defines as "lone wanderer")[49] and later describes it as "*sundorgecynd*" (which Squires glosses as "special quality" following *BT*'s uncertain "a peculiar nature"), possessing physical qualities superior to any normal man and a temperament unlike all other wild beasts.[50] The panther is treated in the poem as both a solitary creature and a community organizer, but the "solitude" here seems to not only describe the panther's lack of company but also its status as the outlier, as the exceptional animal that will not act like an animal. While the panther's exotic physicality would appeal to the poem's audience, the animal's relation to the rest of the natural world makes the panther a suitable metaphor for Christ and the figure of the Teacher.

The first 18 lines of the poem not only introduce the protagonist but work to define a relation between the speaker, the audience of the *Physiologus*, and the natural world as a whole. They read:

Monge sindon geond middan-geard
unrimu cynn, þe we æþelu ne magon
ryhte areccan, ne rim witan;
þæs wide sind geond world innan
fugla ond deora fold-hrerendra

[49] *DOE Online* s.v. *anstapa.*
[50] *BT* s.v. *sundorgecynd.*

wornas wid-sceope, swa wæter bibugeð

þisne beorhtan bosm, brim grymetende,

sealt-yþa geswing. We bi sumum hyrdon

wrætlice gecynd wildra secgan,

firum frea-mærne feor-londum on

eard weardian, eðles neotan

æfter dun-scrafum. Is þæt deor "pandher"

bi noman haten, þæs þe niþþa bearn,

wisfæste weras, on gewritum cyþað

bi þam an-stapan. Se is æghwam freond,

duguða estig, butan dracan anum,

þam in ealle tid ondwrað leofaþ

þurh yfla gehwylc þe he geæfnan mæg.[51] (1-18)

["There are many countless species throughout the world whose nature we cannot properly explain, nor number know; crowds of birds and beasts who tread the ground are widely distributed throughout the world as far and wide as the water, the roaring sea, the surge of waves, encompasses this bright surface. Concerning one of those wild animals, we have heard said that this wondrous species guards a region in faraway lands, very well known to men, to enjoy its native land among mountain caves. That

[51] There is some disagreement whether it is the panther or the dragon that is inflicting the evil ("*yfel*") in this passage. The language leaves it unclear, but I follow Squires in determining that it is the panther given the parallelism with lines 30b-34, which also contrast the animal's generosity with its hostility against the diabolical dragon (Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 52).

beast is called by the name 'panther,' as the sons of men, learned men, make known in writings about the solitary stepper. He is a friend to everyone, generous with gifts, except for the dragon alone, against whom he lives, hostile, through each misery that he may inflict."]

The poem immediately acknowledges the limits of human understanding about the natural world. Animals are so numerous ("*unrim*") that a complete knowledge of the species ("*cynn"*) that exist and what separates them, what their characteristics are, is impossible to possess. While this is an expression of humility before the natural world, it is only a minor one, as the poem moves just as quickly to show that any widespread knowledge about animals is unnecessary for its audience. Further, no animal is completely mysterious or unfathomable – it can be named (as line 12b attests) and unconcealed even if it lives in a cave. Those who so desire can make-known the being of an animal or at least comprehend those characteristics that are useful for illuminating what it means to be human.

The Panther uses the second-person plural "*we*" to illustrate that the speaker and audience will go about this exploration together using knowledge derived from "*gewritum*" ("writings"). Yet these writings are a technology that substantiates and locks meaning, and in a culture where both books and literacy are rare, it is a technology that few have access to. The speaker, who for the rest of the *Old English*

Physiologus will often use "*ic*" ("I"), has this access.[52] This emphasis on book learning portrays the speaker as an authority whose understanding of the natural would should be trusted given its establishment in the learning of wise men, and it will be that speaker's duty to teach the audience the deeper meaning of an animal they would be unfamiliar with and who lives "*feorlondum on*" ("in distant lands").[53] This education will be on the panther's "*æþelu*," a noun meaning "nobility, nobility of birth; noble endowments, noble nature, excellence" and almost always used to describe humans.[54] The *DOE* defines "*æþelu*" in *The Panther* as "referring to all that has life on earth: (inherited) excellence," and it too is language that marks the panther as separate from the other beasts and as an animal worthy of celebration.[55]

The panther's exoticness opens up conceptual space in which the audience's imagination can be stimulated. Unlike an animal native to England, where real-life encounters could color perception, a quality exploited in *The Whale*, the panther's distance gives it no such limitations. The two qualities of the panther that the poem

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[52] The speakers in the *Old English Physiologus* also use "*ic*" on *Panther* 34b, *Whale* 1a, and *Partridge* 1a, all of which indicate they have learned or heard something about an animal. "*We*," in contrast, is used in exhortations for proper living that appear at the end of *The Whale* (84b and 87a) and *The Partridge* (12a). "*Us*" shows up in mentions of Christ dying "*fore us*" (*Panther* 62b; "for us"), in the Pauline quote that ends *The Panther* and identifies gifts that God gives to man (71b), and in the exhortation that closes *The Partridge* (14b). The effect is to paint the speaker alone as the one who possesses knowledge of the natural world but the benefits of that knowledge as something that can be shared by the community as a whole.

[53] The largest feline the Anglo-Saxons may have encountered in England is the lynx, though the only skeleton of this animal on the island dates to 425-600 CE, and the animal is believed to have gone extinct sometime in the medieval period in part due to persecution by humans. See David Hetherington, Tom C. Lord, and Roger M. Jacobi, "New Evidence for the Occurrence of Eurasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) in Medieval Britain," *Journal of Quaternary Science* 21 (2006): 3-8.

[54] *DOE Online* s.v. *æþelu* 1. The *DOE* notes in its entry, "It is often not possible to distinguish clearly forms of the noun *æþelu* from those of the adjective *æþele*. Some instances treated here as the noun may also be taken as the adjective."

[55] *DOE Online* s.v. *æþelu* 1.c.

focuses on are its relationship with other animals and its sensory appeal.[56] To start with the former, it was widely believed in classical and medieval natural history that animals (as well as elements like fire and ice) were engaged in a constant conflict with one another. The result of this violence was not chaos but rather a balance that ensured the world stayed ordered. Meter 11 of the Old English Boethius expresses this belief when Wisdom mentions how

> Swa hæfð geheaðærod hefon-rices weard
> mid his anwealde ealle gesceafta,
> þæt hiora æghwilc wið oðer winð,
> and ðeah winnende wreðiað fæste,
> æghwilc oðer utan ymbclyppeð,
> þy læs hi toswifen. (31-36a)

["Thus the guardian of the heavenly kingdom has restrained all created things with his power so that each one of them struggles against the other, and though struggling firmly supports, each embracing the other on the outside lest they move apart."][57] The panther meets this expectation but in an unexpected way, antagonistic not towards *animalia* as a whole like every other beast but only against a single

[56] A number of essays have examined the use of sensory appeal in the Anglo-Saxon *Physiologus* poems. See Michelle C. Hoek, "Anglo-Saxon Innovation and the Use of the Senses in the *Old English Physiologus* Poems," *Studia Philologica*, 69.1 (1997): 1-10 and Brian McFadden, "Sweet Odors and Interpretive Authority in the Exeter Book *Physiologus* and *Phoenix*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 42.2 (2006): 181-209. I agree with McFadden's reading of the *Old English Physiologus* as a whole, chiefly that its message "is that humans must be on guard to distinguish true wonders from false wonders, but that having been deceived is not automatically a damning fault, since a forgiving God allows the repentant to return"; at 203.

[57] *Old English Boethius*, 430.

archnemesis. It is noted as being "*æghwam freond*" ("a friend to everyone"), a relation that includes both man and animal, but it has rancor with the "*draca*" (*DOE* "dragon, monstrous beast"), which is later called the "*attorsceaþan*"[58] and "*se ealda feond*," the latter a name commonly applied to Satan.[59] This opposition reflects the structure of the *Old English Physiologus* as a whole, which sets up and plays out the conflict between these two cosmological forces, a struggle that would have been resolved in a complete *Partridge*.[60]

But much more of the poem is dedicated to explaining why the panther is thought of as a "*wrætlic gecynd wildra*" ("beautiful species of wild animal") and how its bodily appeal to the other living creatures of the world can be seen as a metaphor for the natural tendency of man to move towards salvation (and, ironically, move away from being animal). The panther, like many animals, is desirable to see. Its fur is described in lines 19b-20a as "*wundrum scyne/ hiwa gehwylces*" ("wondrously shining in each color") in a passage comparing it to Joseph's coat that is greatly expanded from the Latin.[61] It also appeals to the sense of hearing as a "*sweghleoþor cymeð/ woþa wynsumast þurh þæs wildres muð*" ("a harmony comes, the most delightful of sounds, out

[58] Ln. 33b.
[59] Ln. 58b. The *DOE* entry for "*feond*" (s.v. *feond* 3.a.i) lists six other instances of the "eald" + "feond" collocation, including in the Old English version of Bede's *Historia*, the Old English translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* and *Pastoral Care*, and a life of Guthlac. The entry for the noun "*ealdfeond*" adds another 14 instances, three of which refer specifically to Satan.
[60] See below, 79-84.
[61] Lns. 19-30a. The Latin reads, "*Omnimodo varius est sicut tunica Ioseph [cf. Gen. 37.3] et speciosus*" ("It is variegated all over in colour like Joseph's coat [cf. Gen. 37.3] and beautiful"). The Latin text of Y is from *Physiologus latinus versio Y*, ed. Francis Carmody (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1941), which is reprinted in Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 102-103. The translation is by Squires.

of the mouth of the wild beast").[62] Animal noise was often thought of as harsh, discordant, cacophonous. The lion's roar, for instance, was commonly associated with the devil, a move that traces back to 1 Peter 5:8[63], and animal noises were one way devils tried to frighten St. Anthony into apostasy,[64] an image what would be employed by later hagiographers, including those Anglo-Saxons who wrote about the life and sanctity of Guthlac.[65]

With sight and hearing covered, the poem moves to smell:

> Æfter þære stefne stenc ut cymeþ
> of þam wong-stede, wynsumra steam,
> swettra ond swiþra swæcca gehwylcum,
> wyrta blostmum ond wudu-bledum,
> eallum æþelicra eorþan frætwum. (44-48)

["After that voice, a smell emerges from the place, a breath more pleasant, sweeter,

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[62] Lns. 42b-43.

[63] The verse reads, "*Sobrii estote, et vigilate, quia adversarius vester, diabolus, tamquam leo rugiens circuit, quaerens quem devoret*" ("Be sober and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour").

[64] *Vita Antonii* VIII [PL 73]. Evagrius' Latin translation of Athanasius recalls how

> Nam et bestiarum et serpentium formas induentes, omnem protinus locum replevere phantasiiis leonum, taurorum, luporum, aspidum, serpentium, scorpionum, necnon et pardorum atque ursorum. Et haec singular secundum suam fremebant naturam. Rugiebat leo, occidere volens; taurus mugitu et cornibus minabatur; serpens sibilo personabat; luporum impetus ingerebantur; pardus discoloriter auctoris sui calliditates varias indicabat.

["They took on the shapes of wild animals and snakes and instantly filled the whole places with spectres in the form of lions, bulls, wolves, vipers, serpents, scorpions and even leopards and bears, too. They all made noises according to their individual nature: the lion roared, eager for the kill; the bull bellowed and made menacing movements with his horns, the serpent hissed; the wolves leaped forward to attack; the spotted leopard demonstrated all the different wiles of the one who controlled him."]

The translation is from *Early Christian Lives*, ed. and trans. Carolinne White (New York: Penguin, 1998), 15.

[65] *Guthlac B* 907-912.

and stronger than every fragrance, than the herbs of blossoms and the flowers of the trees, more glorious than all the treasures of the earth."]

The ability of the panther to emit such a *stenc* ("smell") is reminiscent of hagiography, where the association of the saintly body with a sweet smell is a common trope. As Michelle C. Hoek notes, "the sense of smell played a more important role in the lives of medieval people than it does today. Since the most powerful smells were unpleasant, such as excrement in the streets and decaying bodies, it is unsurprising that the *Physiologus* author would appreciate the seductive power of a strong pleasant fragrance."[66] It is worth remembering that an audience would also associate the animals that lived proximate to them with foul odors, and the panther's sweet odor is yet another characteristic that marks it as almost nonanimal.

The panther's voice and smell are so delightful that the inhabitants of the world flock to it, a group consisting of both humans and animals:

> Þonne of ceastrum ond cyne-stolum
> ond of burg-salum beorn-þreat monig
> farað fold-wegum folca þryþum,
> eored-cystum ofestum gefysde,
> dareð-lacende; deor efne swa some
> æfter þære stefne on þone stenc farað. (49-54)

["Then from cities and royal thrones and from halls, many bands of warriors in hosts

[66] Hoek, "Anglo-Saxon Innovation," 6.

of people, troops impelled by haste, spear-warriors, travel the paths; wild animals also in like manner, following the voice, go to the smell."]

The aim of this section is to stress the universal appeal of the panther's voice and smell to life on the planet. The penetrative power of these two emissions creates a community encapsulating humans from different places and from different levels of socio-political strata: from an urban center (*ceaster* or "city"), from a power center (*cynestol* or "royal throne"), and from a cultural center (*burhsæl* or "hall"). They are followed by animals. Hoek argues that "in the Anglo-Saxon version of the poem, the animals are mentioned almost as an afterthought to the catalogue of people who respond to the panther."[67] I think she is partially right. While it is certainly the case that humans are privileged here, the poet saw the presence of the animals as necessary. The universality of Christ's appeal is represented in having them flock to the panther, whom the poem earlier established as their "*freond*," and the panther's presence restores the prelapsarian companionship between humans and animals that had been lost along with Paradise. By including animals among those who flock to the panther, not only is the panther established as a natural leader among the beasts, a position the poem identifies as "*þeodwiga*" ("mighty warrior") in line 38a, but it also serves as a subtle and clever admonition to the audience. If it is instinctual for even the irrational life to move towards a being as loving and protective as the panther, then humans should have such an instinct, an inner nature, as well to move towards

[67] Ibid., 8.

their own "panther," Christ. The panther's sensory appeal makes acting otherwise seem foolish, unreasonable. Who could and should resist beautiful sights, sweet smells, and harmonious sounds?

The panther was not an animal the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with, but the idea of a protective animal, sent by a higher power, was one that likely existed before the conversion.[68] The animistic animals, whether a wolf, a raptorial bird, or a boar, however, were physically proximate to those who venerated them. The physical distance of the panther, its ability to be both concealed (by this distance) and open (able to be read, to be understood by wise men), gave a Christian thinker the intellectual space needed to address an important question: How could the being of Christ be expressed to an audience in a way that would be unfamiliar, that could surprise, shock, and entertain them to think in ways not encountered before?[69] The answer was an animal, a being with superhuman physical attributes both like humans and not. This exceptionality, this polarity, could then be mapped to Christ and, though not explicit, to the Teacher, whose use of natural lore was the human equivalent of the panther's sweet smell and pleasing voice. In *The Whale*, the next poem of the *Old English Physiologus*, we see almost the opposite process occurring, one where a local animal, a familiar animal, sees it proximity and hyperreality transform it into a nightmare.

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[68] See Glosecki, "Movable Beasts," 7-11.

[69] As Naomi Sykes points out, "traditional societies frequently equate geographical distance with supernatural distance, perceiving things derived from remote realms as powerful, carrying associations with gods, ancestors, or cultural heroes" (*Beastly Questions: Animal Answers to Archaeological Issues* [London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014], 76-77).

The Killer Whale?

Having established its protagonist in the first of the three poems, the *Old English Physiologus* proceeds to its villain in the contest for men's souls. The whale is imagined as the antitype of the panther, and like that animal, it is notable for attracting other living beings to itself. The panther creates community, but the whale is its destroyer. While this diabolic figure can attempt to pervert and capture humans whom God created as naturally good, it must rely on humans' freedom to choose to follow wickedness, capitalizing on a lack of vigilance in maintaining the Christian self.[70] The whale is a creature to be avoided at all costs, with physicality on an almost unimaginable scale, meant to awe and terrorize the poem's audience into an awareness of its own capacity to sin.

Whereas panthers appear rarely in the Old English corpus, the whale is one of the more commonly encountered animals. The whale has a long literary history as a shadowy creature of the depths, a presence that has been traced back to Indo-Persian mythology and its leavings in the Talmud.[71] One can cite any number of imagined antagonistic giant fish from across many cultures and time periods, including the biblical story of Jonah, *The Voyage of Saint Brendan*, Sinbad's adventures in *One Thousand*

[70] In this I agree with Jeremy Deangelo, who has argued, "the allusions present in *The Whale* identify *discretio spirituum* as the essential skill needed to avoid disguised temptation." See his "*Discretio spirituum* and *The Whale*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 42 (2013): 271-89.

[71] See Cornelia Catlin Coulter, "The 'Great Fish' in Ancient and Medieval Story," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 57 (1926): 32-50.

and One Nights, and perhaps the most famous of all, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.[72] In Anglo-Saxon works, whales commonly appear as an element in ocean kennings, like the "*hronrad*" of *Beowulf*[73] or the "*hwælweg*" of *The Seafarer*,[74] but the cetacean had a material importance to the Anglo-Saxons as well as a metaphoric one.[75] Whales were valued for their blubber and bone, the former providing valuable oil and the latter material being useful for carving into objects like the Franks and Gandersheim Caskets, reliquaries, and book covers.[76] Small cetaceans were also hunted and eaten.[77] The Norwegian sailor Ohthere, according to an account he allegedly provided to Alfred and that was recorded in the translation of Orosius the king's circle produced, claimed to have successfully hunted 60 whales in the span of only two days, though which species of animal he was believed to have killed is unclear.[78]

Humans like Ohthere dared to venture into the whale's homeland for the

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[72] For a brief cultural history of the whale from the classical period to the Renaissance, see Joe Roman, *Whale* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 7-26. Roman discusses *Moby Dick* in detail on 88-92.

[73] Ln. 10a.

[74] Ln. 63a.

[75] Carolin Esser-Miles has discussed the differences between the two most common Old English words for "whale": *hwæl* and *hron/hran*. She notes that *hwæl* is more commonly the gloss for "*cetus*," while *hran* appears more often for "*balena*." It can vary as to which animal these terms represent, but Esser-Miles argues that "if the blurring of boundaries between signifier and concept makes the categories of whale/monster, *cetus/balena*, and *hwæl/hran* confusing, such confusion is nevertheless potentially fruitful for giving rise to the various associated structures that so powerfully enrich Old English poetry." See Carolin Esser-Miles, "'King of the Children of Pride': Symbolism, Physicality, and the Old English Whale" in *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, ed. Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper and Shannon Lewis-Simpson (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2014), 275-302; at 298.

[76] For a discussion of the material objects that whale bones could be made into, see Carol Neuman de Vegvar, "*Hronæs Ban*: Exoticism and Prestige in Anglo-Saxon Material Culture" in *Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, 323-36.

[77] See Ian Riddler, "The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Whale," in *Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, 352-54.

[78] Ohthere's whale hunting exploits are narrated in the Anglo-Saxon translation of Orosius, the most recent edition of which is *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, EETS, S.S. 6 (Oxford: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1980); at 14-15. Ohthere was primarily hunting for walruses (Old English "*horshwæl*," or "horse-whale"), valuing their tusks. As Haruko Momma notes, "the very fact that this Scandinavian visitor's oral report was interpolated into the anonymous Old English translation of Orosius' *Historiae aduersum paganos* seems to imply that, at least in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxons living in the southwest during the late ninth century, Ohthere's description of whales and whale hunting was as extraordinary as the world history penned by St. Augustine's disciple" ("Ælfric's Fisherman and the *Hronrad*," in *Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, 311).

promise of great wealth, but it was clearly a venture that brought great risk. While Ohthere appears to have completed his whale hunts relatively unscathed physically or mentally, other attempts were imagined as not going so smoothly. Ælfric's *Colloquy* is a Latin dialogue (with an Anglo-Saxon gloss) between a master and his pupils, who take on the roles of various laborers, craftsmen, counselors (religious and secular), and other members of a productive society. In it, the master addresses one of the students who has adopted the persona of a fisherman. The "fisherman" says he is willing to fish in fresh water, but the master questions him about why he does not venture into the sea more often. When the fisherman admits he fishes in the ocean only rarely and gives a list of the creatures he catches there, the whale is not among them, and this leads the teacher to question him about the omission. According to the fisherman, he has no desire to pursue the whale even with a number of ships accompanying him. The whale is capable of sinking a ship and killing many with "*anum slege*" ("a single blow"), both the fisherman and "*eac swylce mine geferan*" ("also each of my companions).[79] This seems to elicit a slight rebuke from the teacher, who reminds the fisherman that there are many men quite capable of killing whales and earning great compensation for their catch. The fisherman ends the conversation by admitting that he does not chase the animal "*for modes mines nytenyssæ*" ("because of the cowardice of my mind").[80] There must have been many who felt the same way as the fisherman did.

[79] The text is from *Ælfric's Colloquy*, ed. G.N. Garmonsway (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), 30.
[80] Ibid.

The whale could offer great material reward, but it also was a reminder of mortality, the fear that death could strike at any moment.[81]

The goal of *The Whale* is to make its audience feel the same way about *Fastitocalon*, the name of the beast in the poem, that the poor fisherman in the *Colloquy* does about whales in general.[82] The poem refers to itself as a "*fitte*" in 1a, which, according to the *DOE*, is a rare word meaning "poem" or "song."[83] This establishes a performative setting for the narrative. The first-person pronoun "*ic*" appears in the same line, and knowledge about this creature will be provided by the speaker "*þurh mod gemynd*" ("through thoughts of my mind"),[84] suggesting that information about the whale was acquired through means other than the old writings cited in *The Panther*. *The Whale* must have been a thrilling, visceral work to come across, creating tension and fear in its audience as it recounts the methods the beast uses to destroy its human and animal victims. Unlike the panther, who is friend to all of creation (excepting the dragon), the whale is "*unwillum oft gemeted*" ("often met unwillingly"), and it is "*frecne ond ferðgrim*" ("terrible and fierce in spirit").[85] This establishes the whale's disposition

[81] Momma argues, however, that "the *magister*'s repeated interrogation of a local fisherman about whale hunting might have struck the original audience of the *Colloquy* as somewhat strained" due to the distance from Cerne, the monastery in which Ælfric composed the text, to the ocean as well as the fact that whale hunting was not practiced widely in Anglo-Saxon England at the time ("Ælfric's Fisherman," 310).
[82] The name of the whale comes from the Greek and Latin *aspidocalon*, meaning "asp-turtle." It is believed "Fastitocalon" came by way of an Irish version of the Greek/Latin due to the common practice in Middle Irish of adding an "f" before an initial vowel. This argument was first made by S. Bugge ("Studien über das Beowulfepos," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 12 [1887]) and is cited in Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 71. Hoek stresses how giving the whale this name is a means of expressing power over the unknown through the power of naming, an argument I think accords well with beliefs about the naming of the animals by Adam (Hoek, "Anglo-Saxon Innovation," 3-4).
[83] *DOE Online* s.v. *fitt* (1).
[84] Ln. 3a.
[85] Lns. 4-5a.

as naturally brutish and ill-tempered, and it begins a trend in the poem of viewing humans as naturally good creatures who become susceptible to the devil's traps by letting their guard down and sinning.

We can see these strategies at work in the physical description of the whale:

> Is þæs hiw gelic hreofum stane,
> swylce worie bi wædres ofre,
> sond-beorgum ymbseald, sæ-ryrica mæst,
> swa þæt wenaþ wæg-liþende
> þæt hy on ealond sum eagum wliten,
> ond þone gehydað heah-stefn scipu
> to þam unlonde oncyr-rapum
> setlaþ sæ-mearas sundes æt ende,
> ond þonne in þæt eglond up gewitað
> collen-ferþe. (8-17)

["His appearance is like a rough stone, as if a great clump of sea-weed is wandering near the bank of the sea, surrounded by seabanks, so that seafarers believe they are gazing on some island with their eyes. They then fasten their high-prowed ships to that unland with cables, tie their sea-steeds at the end of their journey, and they, bold in spirit, encamp on that island."]

Comparisons to the panther begin with "*hiw*." The panther's coat was pleasurable to look at, shining "*hiwa gehwylces*" ("in each hue"), impressing the rest of creation with its

radiance and plethora of colors.[86] In contrast, the whale boasts only a dull appearance, "*gelic hreofum stane*" ("like a rugged stone"). This aids its deceptive behavior, allowing it to be mistaken for an island, but it also signals to the audience that the animal's exceptionality will lay in other parts of its body, in its brutality and not in beauty. The passage is notable too for the first characterization of the sailors who encounter the whale. They are called "*collenferðe*" in line 17. *Collenferð* is defined by the *DOE* as "brave-bold-spirited; proud; audacious," and it most often carries positive connotations.[87] A poetic word, it is used to describe the eponymous heroine of *Judith* and the apostle Andrew and his followers in *Andreas*, to name a few examples.[88]

While the poem has traditionally been read as portraying the sailors (and humans more generally) as eager sinners overly susceptible to the devil's temptations, I believe a closer examination of the poem's language reveals a more nuanced situation. Some have argued that the poem referring to the sailors as "*collenferþ*" is a way of signaling the men are arrogant, but I believe instead that what fails them is not a personal fault but a consequence of their being human (though one could argue these are not exclusive). We see this in the next passage, which emphasizes the deceptiveness of the Satanic "animal" in opposition to the good nature of the

[86] Ln. 20a.
[87] *DOE* Online s.v. *collenferhð*. Squires, on the other hand, notes that "The use here to describe the unwary sailors is perhaps closest to that in *Wanderer* 71a if one assumes the sense there that the man who makes a vow *collenferð* makes it rashly, without being fully aware of the circumstances. The use here makes it difficult to assume that the adj. is wholly complimentary in a religious context" (*Old English Physiologus*, 77). Deangelo follows such a viewpoint, translating it as "lacking reservation" in this instance and that "this may be a case of audacity shading into recklessness" (*"Discretio spirituum*," 277n32). By portraying the sailors in a positive light, however, the poem would more greatly emphasize the seductive powers of the whale/Satan, showing that even bold and courageous people can be ensnared, and this is the reading that I prefer.
[88] *Judith* 134b and *Andreas* 538b.

humans:

Ðonne gewiciað werig-ferðe,
faroð-lacende, frecnes ne wenað,
on þam ea-londe æled weccað,
heah-fyr ælað; hæleð beoð on wynnum,
reonig-mode, ræste geliste.
Ðonne gefeleð facnes cræftig
Þæt him þa ferend on fæste wuniað,
wic weardiað wedres on luste,
Þonne semninga on sealtne wæg
mid þa nowe niþer gewiteð
gar-secges gæst, grund geseceð,
ond þonne in deað-sele drence bifæsteð
scipu mid scealcum. (19-31a)

["Then the weary-spirited sailors encamp, not expecting danger, and they kindle a fire on that island, light a towering flame; the men are in joys, weary and eager for a resting place. When the one skillful in treachery feels that travelers are dwelling in security upon him, occupying a camp and enjoying the fine weather, then suddenly the spirit of the ocean goes below the salty waves, seeking the seafloor, and then consigns the ships and sailors to a hall of death by drowning."]

The men are called "*werigferðe*" ("weary-hearted, disconsolate, depressed"), an adjective meant to be read against "*collenferþe*" from several lines before. These sailors are by nature honorable and brave but tired because of their travels on the harsh and unrelenting seas, the ocean journey a familiar metaphor for the challenges and travails human existence could pose.[89] The "*frecnes ne wenaþ*" half-line reiterates their lack of awareness. Being "*reonigmode*" ("sad at heart, weary"), they are simply looking for a place to rest and are now "*on wynnum*" ("in joys") having found one. The whale, on the other hand, is immediately blamed for the men's deaths. It is "*facnes cræftig*" ("cunning in treachery"), naturally deceitful since the Anglo-Saxon word "*cræft*," according to the *DOE*, can mean an acquired skill or, more likely in this case, an innate talent.[90] The adverbial "*semninga*" ("immediately") conveys the unpredictability of the whale dragging its victims to the bottom of the ocean. Medieval thinkers, including the Anglo-Saxons, wondered what the causes of animal attacks were. While domesticated beasts could be manipulated by their masters, and agency for any violence they perpetrated divided between human and animal, who was responsible for attacks on humans by wild beasts? Was it the result of happenstance or a message being sent by God? The answer to these questions would help dictate how people were taught to change their behavior after animal attacks.

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[89] The versions of this rhetorical device most familiar to the Anglo-Saxons would have come from Augustine's and Gregory's writing in the *Soliloquies* and *Pastoral Care*, respectively. For a discussion of this relation, see Juliet Mullins, "*Herimum in mari*: Anglo-Saxon Attitudes Towards *Peregrinatio* and the Ideal of a Desert in the Sea," in *Maritime World*, 59-71.

[90] *DOE Online* s.v. *cræft* 4f.

The solution that *The Whale* provides was that it was ultimately the fault of man in being a sinful creature. This blame could be viewed as the inheritance of Adam and Eve's initial decision to commit wickedness, the fall and expulsion from Eden that ended peaceful cohabitation with animals, or it could be the result of a contemporary sin. In its interpretation of the allegory, *The Whale* acknowledges Satan's malevolence but grants humans the greater agency:

Swa bið scinna þeaw,
deofla wise, þæt hi drohtende
Þurh dryne meaht duguðe beswicað,
ond on teosu tyhtaþ tilra dæda,
wemaþ on willan, þæt hy wraðe secen,
frofre to feondum, oþþæt hy fæste ðær
æt þam wær-logan wic geceosaþ. (31b-37)

["Such is the custom of demons, the way of devils, that they, through a secret power, seduce the living and lead them astray to the ruin of good deeds, entice them with their desires, so that they may seek help and comfort from fiends until they choose a lodging there with the pledge-breaker."]

The language in this passage echoes both *The Panther* and the naturalistic description of *The Whale*, and it works to convince its audience that the devil only has power if humans allow. The devil's natural wickedness is stressed by calling its actions "*þeaw*," a word often translated as "custom" but also used to describe the behaviors of

animals.[91] The physicality of wild animals becomes a metaphor for the demonic "*dyrne meaht*" ("secret power"), a dangerous force that humans must be taught to understand, and the "*heolophelme*" (BT "a helm which conceals or makes invisible the wearer") represents the desire of demons and wild animals to hide themselves and strike unpredictably.[92] Just as humans, when out in the wilderness, needed to remain vigilant against the attacks of wild beasts (and beastlike men), so too did they need to fear the attack of devils, but they had the ability to withstand them if they so chose.

Humans' natural state is once again presented as essentially good, their "*tilra dæda*" ("good deeds") perverted by their ignorance. Like the sailors, they at first seek some sort of "*frofre*" ("comfort"), but as they descend further into sinful behavior, they desire a "*wic*" ("habitation") with the devils. The sinner thus expels him or herself from the human community, becoming like an animal outside of civilized space and outside justice, an idea we saw earlier in the Alfredian Boethius.[93] This choice, the speaker notes, causes the whale's attack to destroy the "*dugup*" (*DOE* "a company of people, the people of a kingdom, people, mankind"), becoming a form of violence against the human community, a stark contrast to the panther's ability to unify the whole of creation.

We see this destructive capability imagined with the whale's feeding habits:

He hafaþ oþre gecynd,

[91] BT s.v. *þeaw* 2b.
[92] Ln. 45a.
[93] See above, 51-52.

wæter-þisa wlonc, wrætlicran gien.

Þonne hine on holme hungor bysgaþ

ond þone aglæcan ætes lysteþ,

ðonne se mere-weard muþ ontyneþ,

wide weleras; cymeð wynsum stenc

of his innoþe, þætte oþre þurh þone,

sæ-fisca cynn, beswicen weorþaþ,

swimmaþ sund-hwate þær se sweta stenc

ut gewiteþ. Hi þær in faraþ

unware weorude, oþþæt se wida ceafl

gefylled biþ; þonne færinga

ymbe þa here-huþe hlemmeþ togædre

grimme goman. (49b-62a)

["He has a second nature, the proud water-monster, one more amazing still. When hunger afflicts him in the sea and the awe-inspiring creature lusts for food, then the sea-guardian opens his mouth, jaws wide; a pleasant smell comes from his belly, so that other species of sea-fish are betrayed by it, swim vigorously to where the smell comes out. They travel there in a foolish company until the wide jaw is filled; then, suddenly, the savage jaws crash together around the prey."]

As we have seen, one of the more persistent ways medieval thinkers portrayed animals

were as beings only capable of responding to bodily urges.[94] The panther is exceptional in its physical appeal and markedly unlike the typical wild animals in its relationship to the rest of creation. It should come as little surprise that it is temperate when it comes to eating, the poem noting the animal is "*symle fylle fægen*" ("always glad of [his] fill").[95] The whale, on the other hand, possesses an appetite that cannot be sated, a hunger that "*bysgaþ*" ("afflicts") it, and it "*ætes lysteþ*" ("lusts for food"). Troubled so, the whale opens up its mouth, and like the panther, emits a "*wynsum stenc*" ("pleasant smell").[96] But the panther's smell worked to bring together the entirety of creation – the whale's is only for its own benefit. It destroys the communities it lures in, here represented by the "*sæfisca cynn*" ("species of fish") who are "*unware*" ("unaware") that they swim towards animal jaws, which critics have traditionally viewed as representing a visceral, common fear of bodily disambiguation and a metaphorical loss of self.[97]

If *The Panther* showed what Christ was like and why he should be flocked to, *The Whale* teaches what Satan was like and how he could be avoided. It also stresses that no animal, no matter its abilities, can hide its nature from man, can conceal itself. *The Whale* thus concludes with an explanation to its audience as to how it can avoid the same fate as the hapless *sæfisca cynn*. Anyone who acts like the "*unware"* small fish

[94] See above, 50-52.
[95] Ln. 35a.
[96] For how the poem may reflect the smell of actual whales, see Esser-Miles, "'King of the Children of Pride,'" 293-94.
[97] See Salisbury, *Beast Within*, 54-58. Salisbury writes that "Christian thinkers from the earliest centuries of Christianity were products of their times, sharing the same fears that haunted their pagan counterparts. The fear of being eaten by beasts entered into Christian thought and became centered on damnation, or the eternal death that was contrasted with the eternal life of salvation"; at 56. For a similar fear in *Volsungasaga*, see below 111-12.

will be deceived by the demonic forces. For the devil to succeed, however, humans must allow him. Just as it is human nature for the eyes to deceive, so too is it a characteristic of the human to have more agency than demons and animals no matter their greater size or strength, the point the master was trying to make to the fisherman in the *Colloquy*. Humans can only fail if they forget they are humans and give into their baser animal nature. The purpose of the *Old English Physiologus* is to ensure that does not happen, and the speaker's teaching about natural lore is vital for such prevention. The final poem of the *Old English Physiologus*, *The Partridge*, shows what will happen when this advice is heeded.

The Partridge's Family Drama

As I mentioned earlier, almost the entire third poem of the *Old English Physiologus* is lost to us, but the narrative arc of this triptych makes the most sense if the animal in question is in fact the partridge. Having established the panther's grace and universal appeal before moving on to the whale's deception and universal hostility, and given its interest in human interaction with the cosmological struggle of Christ and the Devil, its logical that a third section would provide closure. Who do humans ultimately make their dwelling with?

Looking at the entry for the partridge in the Latin version of the *Physiologus* confirms such a progression. As I mentioned before, all we have left of the beginning of *The Partridge* is an identification of "*sumle fugle*" ("a certain bird"), so it is necessary

to consult other versions to get a fuller picture of what the entry likely contained.[98] The Y-version of the partridge entry is brief enough that it can be quoted in full:

> Hieremias dixit de perdice quoniam: clamuit perdix, colligens que non peperit [Hier. 17.11]. Perdix aliena oua calefacit laborans et nutriens; si autem creuerint pulli; et volare coeperint, unumquemque genus euolans fugit ad parentes proprios, et solam eam dimittunt. Sic et diabulus capit genus paruulorum; cum autem uenerint in mensuram aetatis ueniunt ad Christum et ad eccelsiam, et fiet illie insipiens; hodie, si quis est in malis moribus, crastinum fie tut suit sobrius; et fugisti diabulum, hoc est perdicem, et uenies ad parentes tuos iustos et prophetas et apostolos.

["Jeremiah said this of the partridge: the partridge cried out, sitting on a clutch it did not produce (Jeremiah 17:11). The partridge warms alien eggs, working and rearing them. When the chicks grow and begin to fly, each and every kind flies for refuge to its own parents and leaves the partridge solitary. Thus the devil captures the race of young creatures. When, however, they come of age they come to Christ and the Church, and he will be foolish. If today anyone follows evil habits, tomorrow he will be temperate. You have escaped the devil – that is the partridge – and will come to your true parents, the prophets and apostles."][99]

The sunny outlook of *The Panther* is repeated, only this time, humans are compared to

[98] Ln. 1b.
[99] Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 104.

an animal too. Satan is thought of as a kind of invasive species, parasitic, only able to corrupt what naturally belongs to Christ and – important given the subject of this chapter – those who teach about him, his "prophets and apostles," who are imagined as family. Humans are susceptible to the devil when they are young and inexperienced, but when they are allowed to learn and mature, they eventually find salvation.

The B-version of the entry elaborates on a few more characteristics of the partridge/devil animal. It adds that the eggs the partridge steals do not just belong to another bird but a "*perdicus altertius*," a "different partridge," which pairs Christ and Satan as cosmological forces, a reflection of their competition to win the allegiance of humans. This version also notes that the chicks abandon their false parent when they hear "*vocem matris*" ("the voice of their mother"), and comparing the two powers, it tell us that

> Huius imitator est diablous, qui generations creatoris aeterni rapere contendit; et, si quos insipientes et sensus proprii vigore carentes aliquot modo potuerit congregare fouet eos illecebris corporalibus.[100]

["The devil is a mimic of him, striving to seize the offspring of the eternal creator. If he can by any means gather any who are simple and lacking the vigour of their own sense, he cherishes them with fleshly allurements."]

[100] The B text is from *Physiologus latinus: Editions préliminaires, versio B*, ed. Francis Carmody (Paris: E. Droz, 1939), and is reprinted in Squires, *Old English Physiologus*, 110-11. The translation is by Squires.

The entry here argues that the humans who join with the devil were not really all that human in the first place, "lacking the vigour of their own sense" — that is, lacking rationality. These two bestiary traditions illustrate how well the partridge fits alongside the animal subjects of the other two Exeter Book poems. A full Anglo-Saxon *Partridge* would have built upon the antithesis established in *Panther* and *Whale*, with the devilish partridge mimicking other birds analogous to how the whale's *stenc*, on the surface, mirrored the sweet smell of the panther. The difference between the whale and the partridge, of course, is that the latter ultimately fails. In *The Whale*, it was weariness and the treachery of the devil that caused a surrender to sin, but the partridge expands upon this by suggesting inexperience and youth as other factors in humans leading themselves astray. As humans age, they inevitably move toward Christ as they hear his voice, one expressed through the teaching of the gospel or lessons like those found in the *Physiologus*. The blessed human can fly to heaven due to the maturation achieved through Christian learning.

This serves as a fitting conclusion to the *Old English Physiologus*. Looking back to the beginning of *The Panther*, we saw humans largely in a state of ignorance about the natural world and God's overall design. *The Panther* educates and delights about the grace of Christ and the joy of Christian fellowship, learning achieved through the acquisition of animal lore and pleasure in the extraordinary body of the beast. *The Whale*, in contrast, educated and frightened about the deceptive allure and destructive power of the Devil and humans' own flesh. *The Partridge* shows the benefit such an

education provides for the attentive Christian, being almost a celebration and justification for the *Old English Physiologus* as a whole, proving what the unity of the creator's design and the lessons learned from it can accomplish. The final lines of *The Partridge* fit well within such a scheme:

> In swa hwylce tiid swa ge mid treowe to me
> on hyge hweorfaþ, ond ge hell-firena
> sweartra geswicaþ, swa ic symle to eow
> mid sib-lufan sona gecyrre
> þurh milde mod. Ge beoþ me siþþan
> torhte tire-adge talade ond rimde,
> beorhte gebroþor on bearna stæl. (5-11)

["In whatever time you return to me in your heart, and you abandon your dark, hellish crimes, so I will always immediately turn to you in friendship through a gentle spirit. After, you are tallied and numbered radiant and glorious, bright brethren in my children's place."]

Those who made the right decision in taming the animal inside could expect to be part of the heavenly community, "*gebroþor*" who were "*beorhte*" like the panther. The teacher would educate them on how to join that community through imparting messages found in the natural world. It was learning transmitted to him through the "prophets and apostles" and after the Church Fathers, knowledge that the audience of the *Old English Physiologus* did not at first possess, neither the number of animals ("*ne*

rim witan") or, more importantly, their nature ("*æþelu*"). The natural world could show them the path towards achieving salvation, and the teacher who understood it could instruct them on how to be "*talade and rimde*" among the blessed. That was the number in the end that mattered.

Conclusion

Anglo-Saxon teachers needed to be responsible *pastores* for their flocks and to guide them towards salvation. In order to do so, the teacher had to determine how best to achieve this and maintain a thriving Christian community on Earth. One answer, as the *Old English Physiologus* suggests, was to turn to animal lore. The extraordinary bodies of animals made them effective metaphors both for the best the human could be—Christ—and the lowest the human could be: a sinner aligned with demons.

Humans' perceived superiority to animals made these dual figurations possible. Sinners like Satan and those humans he ensnared were the simpler analogy as both were irrational like the brutes. Comparing Christ to an animal, on the other hand, was potentially troubling, and Gregory the Great reassures those folks who thought it might not be a good idea to see the Savior as a creature other than fully human:

> Nec indignum quis iudicet per tale animal incarnatum dominum posse figurari, dum constet omnibus quia per significationem quamdam in scriptura sacra et vermis et scarabaeus ponatur, sicut scriptum est: ego autem sum vermis et non homo. Et sicut apud septuaginta interpretes per prophetam dicitur: scarabaeus de ligno clamavit. Cum ergo

> nominatis rebus tam abiectis et vilibus figuratur, quid de illo contumeliose dicitur, de quo constat quod proprie nil dicatur? Vocatur enim et agnus, sed propter innocentiam. Vocatur leo, sed propter potentiam. Aliquando etiam serpenti comparatur, sed propter mortem vel sapientiam. Atque ideo per haec omnia dici figuraliter potest, quia de his omnibus credi aliquid essentialiter non potest.[101]

["Nor let any consider it unbecoming that the Incarnate Lord can be typified by such an animal; whilst it is admitted by all that He is spoken of, in Holy Scripture, as, in a certain sense, both a worm and a beetle. As it is written; *But I am a worm, and no man*. And as it is said by the prophet in the Septuagint, *A beetle cried out from the wood*. Since then He is typified by the mention of such vile and abject things, what is said offensively of Him, of Whom it is admitted that nothing is said appropriately? For he is called a lamb, but it is for his innocence. He is called a lion, but it is for His might. He is also sometimes compared to a serpent, but it is for His death, or for His wisdom. And He can therefore be spoken of figuratively by all these, because none of all these can be essentially believed of Him. For were He to be really one of these essentially, He could no longer be termed another."]

For Gregory, Christ's metaphoric valence made all of these comparisons possible and untroubling. The savior was only *sort of* like a worm, *sort of* like a beetle, *sort of* like a

[101] *Moralia in Job* XXX.21 [CCSL 143B]. The translation is from *Morals on the Book of Job*, Vol. 3 Part 2, trans. Rev. J. Bliss (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1850), 409-10.

lion, and so on, whereas those animals in their *naturae* and *figurae* could only truly be like themselves. Christ and other humans had a distinct *essentia* ("being or essence of a thing") too but in *natura* and not *figura*. Comparing Christ to animals was therefore no troubling of the human-animal distinction.

Ambrose, Gregory, and the *Old English Physiologus* share this logic. Writing on the fable genre, Susan Crane remarks that it "[deflects] attention from the human and back toward the pleasure of imagining proximity to other animals."[102] The same can be true for the *Physiologus* tradition. We know the Anglo-Saxon audience of *The Panther, The Whale*, and *The Partridge* cared about the *natura* of these three creatures (otherwise why use the texts?), but to what extent this reflected any sort of admiration or respect for actual animals is unclear. While we must remember that the *Physiologus* relied on "the conviction that the other animals are for human use,"[103] the Old English sequence offers the possibility of an affirmative encounter with the animal. While the panther's friendship with all of creation is of course a fantasy that would not be borne out by observation, and the community between animals and man both a hagiographic and eschatological trope, it keeps open the possibility for human and animal companionship. The panther's distance from Anglo-Saxon England made this

[102] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 45. The feminist animal rights scholar Carol J. Adams, however, considers metaphorical imaginings of animals to be a form of violence akin to eating them. "Consumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity," she writes. "So too with language: a subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself." Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, rev. ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 27.
[103] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 79. Though Crane is writing of the later bestiary tradition in this quote, the same thinking applies to the *Physiologus*.

imagining possible, but the whale's proximity, as we have seen, made its aggression and murderous tendencies even more terrifying. Yet in a warrior culture like the Anglo-Saxons had, a space was open for such impressively destructive animals to be respected and even desired, and the literature produced in this manner is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE WARRIOR ANIMAL

The Anglo-Saxons enjoyed hearing about a good barn burner, and a great one goes down late in *Beowulf* between the legendary Swedish king Ongentheow, who is "*eald and egesfull,*"[1] and Geatish brothers by the names of Wulf and Eofor. In the course of the fight, Wulf deals Ongentheow a mighty blow but is himself wounded in the king's counterattack. Eofor then saves his brother's life by finishing off the Swede, splitting his enemy's helmet.[2] When they return to Geatland, their lord, Hygelac, rewards them handsomely for the victory, giving each "*ofermaðmum*" (literally "excessive treasures") in the form of a hundred thousand hides of land and his daughter's hand in marriage to Eofor.[3]

Other than the details I just mentioned, *Beowulf* tells us little about these enigmatic, animal-named siblings, and we are left to speculate what those experiencing the poem would have made of them. Gale R. Owen-Crocker notes that names like "Wulf" and "Eofor" would have struck the audience of *Beowulf* as strange given how rare uncompounded names are both in the poem and in late Anglo-Saxon England at

[1] Ln. 2929a. All text of *Beowulf* is from *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). All translations in Old English are my own, though I have consulted those in *The Beowulf Manuscript: Complete Texts and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. and trans. R.D. Fulk, DOML 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Perhaps not coincidentally, the same half-line characterizing Ongentheow is used to describe a bear in the wisdom poem *Maxims II*, where we hear in lines 29a-30b how "*Bera sceal on hæðe*, *eald and egesfull*" ("A bear shall be in the heath, old and terrible"). The text of *Maxims II* is from *Old English Shorter Poems Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*, ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork, DOML 32 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 176.

[2] Beowulf recounts the details of the battle in lns. 2484-89.

[3] Ln. 2993.

the time of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript's production.[4] Attempting to explain their place in the poem, she writes, "The significance of Eofor and Wulf is not about Woden or Freyr. It is about the spirit and power of the beasts themselves. It reflects myth rather than legend. It is not concerned with the adventures and characteristics of superhuman but basically anthropomorphic gods, but rather about a power that existed in parallel to human beings – that of the beast."[5]

I agree that this power could be conceived as mythic, but it was also observable in everyday life. Still plentiful in England at this time, the wild boar would have been encountered by Anglo-Saxons as they traveled across the countryside, and they likely saw the animals aggressively charging humans and other beasts.[6] This resulted in a healthy (and quite possibly life-saving) respect for the animal. Having viewed analogous attacks myself (albeit from the comfort of my own living room),[7] I can understand this fear and why the boar has historically been associated with warriors, including those in Anglo-Saxon England. The boar was an animal defined by its fierceness. Isidore noted the boar was named "*verres*" in Latin "because he has great

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[4] Owen-Crocker, "Beast Men," 260.
[5] Ibid., 273. See also Williams, "'For the Sake of Bravado,'" 198, where he writes, "The brothers' names heighten the sense of a bestial environment where human identity is indistinct, compromised or mutable."
[6] Due in large part to hunting, the species of wild boar native to Britian likely went extinct in the later half of the thirteenth century. See Umberto Albarella, "The Wild Boar," in *Extinctions and Invasions: A Social History of British Fauna*, ed. Terry O'Connor and Naomi Sykes (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2010), 63-65.
[7] For video of these attacks, see "Sinister Swine," YouTube video, 3:09, from the documentary *Pig Bomb* televised by the Discovery Channel, January 7, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZB5b-jX10Q. These attacks, however, are rare, and John J. Mayer has compiled data on wild pig attacks between 1825 and 2012. In the year *Pig Bomb* was released (2009), only 14 attacks were noted, though the number has risen significantly in the past two decades. John J. Mayer, "Wild Pig Attacks on Humans," in *Wildlife Damage Management Conferences –Proceedings*, ed. J.B. Armstrong and G.R. Gallagher (2013), 20 (Fig. 1), accessed at http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdm_wdmconfproc/151.

strength (*vis*, plural *vires*),"[8] and the wild boar, "*aper*," "is so named from its ferocity (*feritas*)."[9] In the Old English poem *Maxims II*, its separation from man and unique physicality are emphasized. "*Eofor sceal on holte*," we are told, *"toð-mægenes trum*" ("The boar shall be in the forest, strong in its tusks").[10] To hunt this creature in Anglo-Saxon England, one wielded an "*eoforspreot*," a "boar-spear." This weapon was carried by the Geats on their way to Grendel's mere in *Beowulf*,[11] and *eoforspreot* is the term the Anglo-Saxons used to gloss the Latin "*venabulum*" ("hunting-spear") in several manuscripts.[12] The chase could prove fatal. Since the boar made its home in the forest, pursuing it exposed the human to other dangerous animals, whether bears, wolves, or bestial human outlaws. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a version of which, the C-text, appears in the same manuscript as *Maxims II*, tells how Carl, king of the Franks, was killed by a boar in 885, presumably while hunting it.[13]

Anglo-Saxon warriors wore armor adorned with the image of the boar into battle, with boars appearing on three of the five helmets that have survived from the period (and animal images adorn all five).[14] A sword containing boar engravings has

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[8] *Etymolgiae* XII.i.25.
[9] *Etymolgiae* XII.i.27.
[10] Lns. 19b-20a.
[11] *Beowulf* ln. 1437b.
[12] *DOE Online* s.v. *eoforspreot*.
[13] The entry reads, "*Þy ilcan gere ær middan wintra forðferde Carl Franca cing and hine ofsloh an efor" (*"That same year, Carl, king of the Franks, died before the middle of winter, and a boar killed him"). The text is from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Volume 5: MS C (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 63-64.
[14] These are the Sutton Hoo, Benty Grange, Wallaston (also commonly known as the Pioneer Helmet), York (also known as the Coppergate Helmet), and Staffordshire helmets, all of which date to the seventh or eighth century. The last of these, part of the hoard first discovered in 2009, is fragmentary and to this day still being pieced together, though it is unclear whether the entire object will be reattached or was even present in the first place. Leslie Webster has argued that the fact that many of the objects are incomplete and appear to have been stripped or broken down from other items may indicate that the hoard "is essentially precious scrap put together for recycling." See Leslie Webster et al., "The

also been discovered.[15] On the Sutton Hoo helmet, boar heads can be found at the end of the object's two eyebrows, aligning the ferocity of the animal with the intensity a warrior's eyes should display in combat. The Benty Grange and Wollaston helmets, though, have the most striking representations of the animal, with the boars appearing as figures on the top of the helmets (a depiction much more visible to an enemy than the eyebrow ends on Sutton Hoo). Cavities on the Benty Grange boar indicate that the figure was once topped by studs that were meant to represent the bristles of the animal.[16] These helmets likely evolved from the boar images that Germanic tribes had been wearing for centuries. Tacitus notes in *Germania* that the Suevi chose to wear a boar emblem into battle rather than actual armor, and one can suppose that some trial-and-error (or Roman influence) caused later tribesmen to see the wisdom in wearing both the boar *and* armor into combat.[17]

Literary critics have long been interested in these helmets as analogues to the material culture depicted in Old English poetry, especially that in *Beowulf*. "*Eoforlic scionon / ofer hleorbergan gehroden golde, / fah ond fyrheard*" ("Figures of a boar, decorated with gold, shone above the cheek-guards, decorated and hardened by fire") we are told in a description of the Geats' armor, and other objects adorned with boars appear

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Staffordshire Hoard (Ogley Hay): Problems of Interpretation," *Antiquity* 85 (2011): 222.

[15] See Hilda R. Ellis Davidson, *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 49.

[16] Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 237. As Richard North points out, "The older Sutton Hoo helmet, probably from before *c.* 625, may also feature a boar in its ridge-like stylisation of a hair-crest bisecting the helmet from the forehead to the back" ("You Sexy Beast: The Pig in a Villa in Vandalic North Africa, and Boar-Cults in Old Germanic Heathendom," in *Representing Beasts*, 162).

[17] *Germania* XLV [LLA 382]. Tacitus believes that the Suevi inherited this practice from neighboring Celtic tribes, and this may be the source of Germanic interest in the animal. See North, "You Sexy Beast," 161-62.

throughout the poem.[18] Some have seen proof in the Anglo-Saxon helmets and passages from *Beowulf* of a belief in the boar images as either apotropaic or at least the leavings of a formerly shamanistic society that possessed such a belief. "In a shamanistic context," Stephen O. Glosecki writes, "the power of this emblem conjoins sympathetic magic – the image equals the object represented – with the capability of animalistic attack."[19] Such an interest in boars, it is thought, may have emerged from the veneration of Freyr and Freya, Norse gods and siblings who rode boars, with Freyr's *Gullinbursti* ("Golden-Bristled") being the best known.[20]

Glosecki admits that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what the boar meant to the Geats in the poem or the audiences of *Beowulf* in Anglo-Saxon England, but we do know that it held power as a metaphor throughout the early medieval period, even after the conversion.[21] The Benty Grange helmet is one example of this, notable not only for the boar figure but for a silver Christian cross on its noseguard, but examples can be found later in the period as well.[22] Asser's *vita* of Alfred, a ninth-century text,

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[18] *Beowulf* lns. 303b-305a. Other objects with boar images that appear in the poem are on lines 1112a (an "*eofer irenheard*," "iron-hard boar," believed to be a reference to a part of a helmet), 1328a (Hrothgar remembers a battle where "*hniton feþan, / eofereas cnysedan*" ["foot-soldiers clashed, struck against boars"], another likely reference to helmets), 1453a (Beowulf's helmet, which protects him against the monsters of Grendel's mere, was "*besette swinlicum*," "embellished with boar-figures"), and 2152b (an "*eaforheadfodsegen*," "boar's-head banner," which is given to Beowulf by Hrothgar and then gifted to Hygelac; for a possible boar banner in *Elene*, see below, 176-78).

[19] Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, 193.

[20] Owen-Crocker, however, notes that the duo were "fertility gods, not war gods, and their link with the boar is supposedly due to the outstanding reproductive qualities of the pig family," but the meaning of the image could have moved from an association with fertility to an association with battle. See Owen-Crocker, "Beast Men," 266. See also Chadwick, Davidson, and Chadwich, "Finglesham Man," 24. For more on the boar and possible veneration of Freyr and Freya in Anglo-Saxon England, see Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1981), 30-33, and North, "You Sexy Beast," 161-70.

[21] Glosecki, "Movable Beasts," 14.

[22] Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, 223-52 (plate 72).

would compare the monarch's skill in combat with that of a boar.[23] Asser's metaphor may not have come from Anglo-Saxon England but rather his native Wales,[24] yet he still must have believed it was a comparison that made sense to his audience.

My intention in starting this chapter with a discussion of the boar (and I will turn to the wolf shortly) has been to show how expansive the cultural material could be in shaping the identity of a predatory animal and those warriors imagined like them. In the last chapter, we looked at how animal behaviors and characteristics were used to instruct Christians to avoid the temptations of sin and remain part of the human community; here, we think about those who protected that community. Whether through poems or through their material culture, the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed telling stories of warriors who acted like beasts. Like an animal, the warrior was an agent of chaos through the violence he could inflict, but he was also a fixer of chaotic problems. Both before and after the introduction of Christianity, warriors and animals were capable of mixing both metaphorically and through and on the body. However, the violence the warrior was capable of needed to be controlled, channeled in ways that, in the end, reified human superiority. As Ambrose cautioned, "*Si crudelitas pascit ferarum haec rabies est, quae propter saeuitiam trucidantur, uide ne in te quoque crudelitatis tuae*

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[23] *Vita Alfredi,* ch. 38. Chapter numbers are from *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004). Translations of Asser are from *Alfred the Great: Asser's* Life of King Alfred *and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (New York: Penguin, 1983). Ryan Lavelle wonders if Asser's association of Alfred with the boar might have reflected Alfred battling the Vikings with the "pig's head" military formation. See Ryan Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpreations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2010), 279-80.

[24] Ifor Williams, *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain, from the Book of Taliesin* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972), xxixn2, cited in *Alfred the Great*, 242n70.

uertatur inmanitas" ("If you revel in ferocity, the dominant trait of savage beasts for which reason they are slain, see that you, too, may not become a victim of your own atrocious cruelty").[25] Under such logic, unguided ferocity was wrong, but the ferocity that destroyed "savage" beasts was not. In narratives like the swimming episode in *Beowulf* and the "War of the Northern Kings" in *Genesis A*, the whale and wolf, respectively, come to represent the physicality that separates the warrior from the rest of society but also the forces that must be destroyed for that society to thrive. Such works construct the idea of who the ideal warrior should be, but they also gave their creators an opportunity to imagine an existence outside of the human and a desire to be like the very beings they were depicting being slaughtered.

What Makes a Warrior?

What makes a warrior exceptional, separate from both fellow combatants and those who did not fight? There are many ways to approach this question, but the answer must account for the warrior's actions and for the superhuman body the warrior possesses (though these are always inseparable). This in turn brought up a whole other series of questions. In what ways does a warrior follow the mores of society, and when the warrior must depart from those standards, was it justified? How could the warrior channel his or her great capacity for violence into the proper ends? Who determined those proper ends? What was the warrior's relationship with his or her lord, whether the terrestrial or heavenly ruler? As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe notes,

[25] *Hexaemeron* VI.3.

"The touchstone of [the heroic life] – as represented in Old English literature at least – is the vital relationship between retainer and lord, whose binding virtue is loyalty."[26]

Imagining the warrior's exceptional physicality and how best to illustrate it was a tricky proposition. The gnomic Exeter Book poem *The Gifts of Men* tells us that God grants each person a defining characteristic or skill, and "*Sum mægenstrengo furþor onfehð*" ("One receives more strength") while another is "*on londe snel, / fepespedig*" ("quick on land, foot-speedy").[27] Portraying the manifestation of this "*mægenstrengo*" (*BT* "great force") or being "*fepespedig*" (*DOE Online* "fleet of foot") in a human required vivid imagery to be memorable. One could label a warrior "powerful," "mighty" or "strong" as Beowulf is when the poem states that "*se wæs moncynnes mægenes strengest / on þæm dæge þysses lifes*" ("He was, of mankind, the strongest of might on that day of this life"), but this could have only been so impactful.[28] One could also use numbers for this purpose, such as the poem's linking of Beowulf and Grendel's strength to that of 30 men, but this is an abstraction (Which 30 men? What size are they? How old are they?) removed from everyday experience.[29]

Instead, concrete imagery, especially analogies that could be understood with real-life experience, would be more effective. I can offer as a modern-day example the

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[26] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Values and Ethics in Heroic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature,* 2nd ed., ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 101. Similarly, Mark C. Amodio notes that the lord-retainer relationship "may be the theme's [heroism] most important element" (*The Anglo-Saxon Literature Handbook* [Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014], 366).

[27] Lns. 33b-34a and 52b-53a.

[28] Lns. 196-97.

[29] Grendel, we are told, "*on ræste genam / þritig þegna*" ("seized thirty thanes from their beds"; lns. 122b-123a). Beowulf's strength is mentioned by Hrothgar when informing his court about the Geatish hero, noting that sailors said "*þæt he þritiges / manna mægen-cræft on his mund-gripe/ heapo-rof hæbbe"* ("that he, brave in battle, possesses the strength of thirty men in his hand-grip"; lns. 379b-381a).

memorable tagline used to describe DC Comics' Superman in radio and television serials of the 1940s and 1950s, a phrase many are still familiar with: "Faster than a speeding bullet…more powerful than a locomotive…able to leap tall buildings in a single bound!"[30] Broadcast around the country, this jingle allowed those in rural communities more familiar with firearms to imagine the hero's quickness as comparable to the bullets they shot or the trains that passed through their towns, and those in cities could relate Superman's jumping ability to the skyscrapers that dominated their urban landscape. Anglo-Saxons too could compare their warriors to technology, though more for their function in society than for their bodies, for instance as a "*helm Scyldinga*" ("protector of the Scyldings," "*helm*" usually meaning "helmet" but here applied to a person).[31] They looked more often, however, to non-technological metaphors to imagine the physical capabilities of their great warriors, and animal imagery became a common means of achieving this.

We make this move too in our own heroic literature. To see this, all one needs to do is look at the shelves of the local comic book store. Three of the more popular superheroes are animal in their physicality/physiology and iconography: Batman, Spider-Man, and Wolverine. This trio's animality makes them relatable and alien to our understanding at the same time. Batman's gliding through the night skies rouses fear as an approaching bat could. Spider-Man's sticky webs are familiar to anyone who

[30] Larry Tye, *Superman: The High-Flying History of America's Most Enduring Hero* (New York: Random House, 2012), 89.
[31] Dennis Cronan theorizes that the word "*helm*" (*BT* "helmet") eventually came to be associated with the idea of protection more generally and from there was linked to those most responsible for being a protector, lords. See Dennis Cronan, "Poetic Meanings in the Old English Poetic Vocabulary," *English Studies* 84.5 (2003): 406.

has accidentally walked through an actual arachnid's trap. Despite his small stature, Wolverine's bestial rage and set of claws align him with the animal whose name and habitat in Northern Canada he shares and who we can see on television whenever we choose. Similarities exist between these characters and the warriors of the medieval period, who acted animalistic and sometimes became physiologically animal.

This idea was not particularly new in the Anglo-Saxon period either. One can trace this move of associating the heroic body with animals from the Gilgamesh legends through Egyptian myth and into the classical period's poetry and natural history. Pliny, in his book on man in the *Naturalis historia* (VII), provides us a starting point for the logic behind this comparison:

> Prima roboris spes primum que temporis munus quadripedi similem facit. Quando homini incessus? Quando vox? Quando firmum cibis os? Quam diu palpitans vertex, summae inter cuncta animalia inbecillitatis iudicium? Iam morbi tot que medicinae contra mala excogitatae, et hae quoque subinde novitatibus victae? Et cetera sentire naturam suam, alia pernicitatem usurpare, alia praepetes volatus, alia nare : hominem nihil scire, nihil sine doctrina, non fari, non ingredi, non vesci, breviter que non aliud naturae sponte quam flere![32]

["The early promise of strength and the first gift of time make him like a four-footed

[32] Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, VII.i.4 [LLA 399]. Translations of the *Naturalis historia* are from Pliny the Elder, *Natural History: a Selection*, trans. John F. Healey (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

animal. When does man walk? When does he speak? When is his mouth firm enough for solid food? How long does his fontanelle pulsate – a sign that man is the weakest among all living creatures? Then there are the diseases to which he is subject, and the cures devised against these ills that are overcome by new maladies. All other animals know their own natures: some use speed, others swift flight, and yet others swimming. Man, however, knows nothing unless by learning – neither how to speak nor how to walk nor how to eat; in a word, the only thing he knows instinctively is how to weep."]

Warriors knew their bodies, their "natures," better than the average human, able to use those bodies much like the animals that took advantage of their abilities to run and swim. Jennifer Neville argues that in the Anglo-Saxon period "the distinction between humanity and the natural world involved not so much the assertion of human superiority (as in Elizabethan writing), but rather the recognition of human inferiority to nature's power."[33] Neville here is speaking of the body (as the Anglo-Saxons certainly believed their minds were superior to anything found in nature), but warriors, unlike their peers, were not inferior to "nature's power" but rather on par with or even able to exceed it through physical means. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that animals were vehicles through which "foreclosed potential opened for exploration," and they provided a means to better recognize the perceived physical

[33] Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, 35.

boundaries the heroic warrior could shatter.[34]

The conflicts between human and beast we will see in this chapter display the tensions that existed in depicting the warrior identity. Heroic warriors were capable of committing animalistic violence in combat, but it was this same kind of violence that threatened the community the warrior swore to protect. The construction of warrior identity was a response to the threat of that violence, an aggression that could emerge from within the community but more often from its outside. Wolves could attack from the forest, but wolfishness could infect human souls and bodies. We begin our look at these bestial warriors as they appear early in the Anglo-Saxon period. The animal force the heroic warrior needed in order to kill animals was sometimes expressed through the flesh alone, as in Beowulf's crushing defeat of Dæghrefn,[35] but it could manifest itself too through material objects placed on or proximate to the body. These combinations of the human body, animal-like behavior, and material objects can be illuminated by the idea of the "circuit" or "assemblage," a theory of identity introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that resists the humanist notion of a unified, stable subjectivity and instead posits the subject as in flux, moving between human and animal states, as "becoming" rather than "being." We can catch a glimpse at such a dynamic by looking at one of the earliest expressions of warrior identity in Anglo-Saxon England: the burial.

[34] Cohen, "Inventing with Animals," 40.
[35] See below, 127.

Anglo-Saxon Warriors Assemble!

The burial practices of early Anglo-Saxon England, descended from a number of older traditions from Rome and the North Sea Zone, were a memorializing of the human subject that recognized the importance of animals and material objects in identity formation. The motives behind depositing grave goods are still debated. Some have theorized that the items deposited by the Anglo-Saxons were thought useful for the afterlife.[36] This hypothesis has fallen out of favor, though, and recently, others have argued that burial was primarily a means for the construction of the deceased's identity, the final image of the deceased that his or her community would see. David Hinton notes, "Goods do not seem to have been meant 'for use' but may have been symbols - weapons to identify the status, or brooches the family, of their possessor."[37] Howard Williams agrees, writing

> Early Anglo-Saxon funerals may have served to perform and affect the way the world is perceived, and are particularly geared to the creation and citation of concepts of the person in life and death – *personhood*. These concepts of personhood, cosmos and myth rarely exist in a power-vacuum; they are geared to particularly ways of seeing the world used in strategies of domination and resistance and in asserting claims to resources and identities. In this sense, mortuary practices are

[36] David Hinton, *Archaeology, Economy and Society: England from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Century* (London: Seaby, 1990), 14.
[37] Ibid.

simultaneously concerned with promoting *ideologies*.[38]

The deposited items told a story about who the deceased was and how others could and should be like him or her. The sum was a schematic of identity, the constitutive parts of the deceased's personhood laid out around his or her body – in short, an assemblage.

Deleuze and Guattari introduced their idea of "becoming" in their study of Franz Kafka's works.[39] As with many of the duo's concepts, "becoming" (and "becoming-animal") can be difficult to define precisely. As I mentioned before, it rejects the traditional humanist idea of a unified, stable, selfhood, replacing it with a conception of identity as fluid, one where a subject "[enters] into a relation with the various minor, or nondominant, modes of existence that are commonly viewed as being the 'other' of the human."[40] "Becoming" reflects, according to Steve Baker, a desire "to understand something about lived experience in the world, and about the scope for shaping that experience."[41] It is what Deleuze and Guattari call "deterritorialization," a process where, as Gerald Bruns notes, "a subject no longer occupies a realm of stability and identity but is instead folded imperceptibly into a movement or into an amorphous *legion* whose mode of existence is nomadic."[42]

The animal, and the desire to be "animal," becomes part of this assemblage of

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[38] Howard Williams, "At the Funeral," in *Signals of Belief in Early England*, 69 (emphasis in original). See also Chris Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[39] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.
[40] Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals*, 57.
[41] Baker, *Postmodern Animal*, 103.
[42] Gerald L. Bruns, "Becoming-Animal (Some Simple Ways)," *New Literary History* 38.4 (Autumn 2007): 703.

identity, hence "becoming-animal." Because becoming deterritorializes, though, Deleuze and Guattari are careful to point out it is not imitation, acting purposefully like a bunny or a bear. These are stable subjectivities that Deleuze and Guattari call "molar," and they note that imitation "is always territorial."[43] They continue:

> There is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory. Nor is it the result of a flaw or a malediction, the effect of some sort of guilt. As Melville says of the becoming-whale of Captain Ahab, it is a 'panorama,' not a 'Gospel.' It is a map of intensities. It is an ensemble of states, each distinct from the other, grafted onto the man insofar as he is searching for a way out.[44]

Becoming-animal is an attempt by an imaginative thinker, an "experimental man," as Deleuze and Guattari put it,[45] to escape categorization, to represent, as Madan Sarup notes, a "self [that] is all flux and fragmentation, [a] collection of machine parts."[46] It is the practice of an artist rather than the ritual of a state or institution. Baker writes that "Becoming-animal, then, is implicated in a more widespread becoming-minoritarian, in which one of the things questioned and resisted is any authoritarian imposition of sense or meaning, and any officially sanctioned forms of interpretation

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[43] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 14.
[44] Ibid., 35-36.
[45] Ibid., 7.
[46] Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 96.

or representation."[47] Becoming offers the artist what can either be translated as "line of flight" or "line of escape" (the French is "*une ligne de fuite*") to avoid Oedipalization, an attempted stabilization of the subject from the outside.[48] However, this attempt at escape is often unsuccessful, as we will see.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has attempted to locate identities exhibiting "becoming" in medieval culture.[49] In *Medieval Identity Machines*, Cohen focuses his discussion on the assemblage of the chivalric knight, whom he describes as "a creature composed of flux rather than essence, a centaur sustained through malleable alliance, a fantastic becoming-horse."[50] However, it is difficult not to see the knight and his relationship with the horse as part of the Oedipalizing code of chivalry. The knight may have an affective response to the horse and thus in some way form his identity through an animal Other, but the "line of flight" must fail as the knight's desires are Oedipalized by a strict system of rules that determine his behavior. Nonetheless, Cohen's introduction of "becoming" to the analysis of medieval texts has been an integral step in bringing greater attention to the intersection of human and animal in medieval identity formation and a greater willingness to see human-animal hybridity as a way of reimagining and even resisting cultural norms.

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[47] Baker, *Postmodern Animal*, 104-113.
[48] On the difficulty of translating "*une ligne de fuite*," see Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements" in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnestoa Press, 1987), xvi.
[49] For another study using Deleuze and Guattari's theory to read late medieval texts, see Randy P. Schiff, "Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal: Primal Courtliness in *Guillame de Palerne* and *William of Palerne*," *Exemplaria* 21.4 (2009): 418-38.
[50] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 47.

Deleuze and Guattari's work has been controversial in the field of animal studies. While its critique of the human-animal distinction has been seen as a positive step toward reconfiguring our response to nonhumans, its utility for advances in animal welfare and it skepticism of relationships with "companion" species has been questioned.[51] Deleuze and Guattari infamously declared pets and other domesticates as Oedipalizing creatures and unworthy of desiring with.[52] Xavier Vitamvor writes that because of this belief "the discourse of becoming-animal is incapacitated to offer any guidance as regards companion or working creatures. Because wildlife is idolized by them in murky imagery of alliance with exceptional beasts and/or fantasy packs…there's no conceptual space to treat concrete cases or actual policies of biodiversity or conservation."[53]

Despite these criticisms (which, as a longtime cat owner, I am sympathetic to), I believe that the idea of becoming can tell us much new about the Anglo-Saxons' construction of warrior identities by allowing us to consider the role animals played in that production. It can also take us away from the determinism of the shamanistic

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[51] See Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 27-30 and Xavier Vitamvor, "Unbecoming Animal Studies," *Minnesota Review* 73/74 (Fall 2009): 183-87. Karl Steel advises "to ensure that an attention to becoming does not ignore the advantages and operations of the human domination of animals, the recognition of the constructedness of the categories of human and animal and life itself must be allied with a consideration of the categories' real effects and the limitrophic operations that sustain them" (*How to Make a Human*, 13).
[52] This argument comes in Deleuze and Guattari's differentiation of nonhuman animals into the categories of "Oedipal" animals, "State" animals, and "demonic animals." Most pets, they argue, are "Oedipal," "animals each with its own petty history 'my' cat, 'my' dog. These animals invite us to regress, draw us into a narcisstic contemplation…*anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool*" (emphasis in original). "State" animals are those "treated in the great divine myths, in such a way as to extract from them series or structures, archetypes or models," while demonic" animals are "pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale." Deleuze and Guattari are careful to note that any animal can be placed in one of these three modes, but it is of course much rarer for the cat and dog, as they are constructed in modern culture, to be imagined as Deleuze and Guattari's privileged category of "demonic" (*Thousand Plateaus*, 240-43).
[53] Vitamvor, "Unbecoming Animal Studies," 185.

theory advanced by Glosecki, Owen-Crocker, and many specialists in Anglo-Saxon archaeology.[54] These works have much to offer, but they rely on seeing subjectivity as stable, the product of an all-encompassing system of belief rather than the local imagining of a single author or work. Becoming allows us to see the Anglo-Saxons as depicting the warrior subject as consisting of flows and intensities, as a negotiation of the human and the animal that existed in what Giorgio Agamben has called the "caesura" of those two categories.[55]

Warrior identities are the product of human, animal, and material combinations, a trio we find in early Anglo-Saxon burials. The contents of a burial depended on a number of factors related to the deceased, most significantly class, gender, and age.[56] Limiting our consideration to wealthy adult males, those most likely to be a part of the Anglo-Saxon warrior elite, we find some commonalities as to what was included in these burials. Most males were interred with small personal items that could be used to make fires and cut (like a small axe or knife), but the burials of the more privileged saw weapons and armor commonly placed in the grave.[57] Animal images often adorned these items, likely to reinforce some aspect of the wearer's

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[54] See above, 28-29.
[55] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 79.
[56] For a summary of this thought in recent archaeological studies, see Tania M. Dickinson, "Overview: Mortuary Ritual," in *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, ed. David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford, and Helena Hamerow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221-37. See also Ellen-Jane Pader, "Material Symbolism and Social Relations in Mortuary Studies," in *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979*, ed. Philip Rahtz, Tania Dickinson, and Lorna Watts, BAR British Series 82 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1980), 143-59; Ellen-Jane Pader, *Symbolism, Social Relations and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains*, BAR International Series 130 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982); Nick Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite*, BAR British Series 288 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1999).
[57] Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions*, 70.

identity, hold protective power, or both, as we saw with the Benty Grange helmet.[58] Other items commonly placed in graves included small pieces of an animal, like a tooth or a claw, though these are found in women's graves also.[59] In some instances, whole animals were sacrificed, cremated, and placed in the grave or killed and deposited there whole, the most famous example being the horse buried in Sutton Hoo's Mound 17.[60] Such practices eventually fell out of favor with the spread of Christianity on the island. A new belief system that promised a rich afterlife in heaven offered a better use for resources than depositing them with the dead.[61]

The items placed proximate or onto (though this is rare) the warrior's body created an identity that could be celebrated and reinforce the values of the ruling class, but it was an identity where the human needed to be supplemented by the nonhuman, whether material objects or animal bodies. The Anglo-Saxon burial promoted an ideology of what a warrior should be, representing how he "had won great booty, and the success he had in protecting himself, his kin and his land from despoliation and slavery."[62] The same can be said of heroic poetry, and indeed, Martin Carver has noted how "a grave is not simply a text, but a text with attitude, a text inflated with emotion…like poetry it is a palimpsest of allusions, constructed in a certain time and

[58] See above, 90-91.
[59] Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions*, 70.
[60] Chris Fern, "Horses in Mind," in *Signals of Belief in Early England*, 131-35 (Figures 7.1, 7.3).
[61] Philip Rahtz, "Cemeteries, Unfurnished," in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge et al., 2nd ed. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 94.
[62] Hinton, *Archaeology, Economy and Society*, 23.

place."[63] The difference, though, is that poetry could indulge any of the poet's (and the culture that produced such poetry) imaginative desires, offering much more vivid possibilities of humans "becoming-animal." Further, it provided an opportunity for animality to be presented as a corrupting and destructive force. It will be helpful at this point to see how such desires could be expressed through two narratives that are believed to share a common ancestry with the heroic poetry of Anglo-Saxon England. These are *Volsungasaga* and *Hrólfs saga kraki*, two of the Old Norse *fornaldarsögur*.

Human-Animal Warriors in Two Old Norse *Fornaldarsögur*

Reading the *fornaldarsögur*, one gets the impression that animal flesh and blood were the favorite performance-enhancing drugs of the Old Norse warrior.[64] In *Volsungasaga*, Sigurðr, having slain the dragon Fafnir, is asked by his traveling companion and foster father, the smith Regin, to roast the beast's heart and give it to him to eat. Unlike the young Volsung, Regin understands the power that the dragon's flesh confers and values it for himself. Sigurðr at first does as his foster father asks, but when he tastes some of Fafnir's "*hjartablóð*" ("heart's blood") to check if the food is ready, he is able to understand the speech of nearby birds. They are chattering about Regin's plan to betray Sigurðr and alone possess the dragon's riches.[65] Sigurðr should be the one to

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[63] Martin Carver, "Burial as Poetry: The Context of Treasure in Anglo-Saxon Graves," in *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2000), 37.

[64] And for the warrior-athletes of our own time too, as was evidenced by the controversy surrounding Ray Lewis, a linebacker for the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, before the 2013 Super Bowl. *Sports Illustrated* linked Lewis to a supplement known as "deer antler spray." Despite its name, the drug is not a liquid but a powder taken via capsule, and the consumption of deer antler is believed to improve an athlete's strength and speed.

[65] *Volsungasaga* 19. The Old Norse text of *Volsungasaga* is from *The Saga of the Volsungs*, ed. R.G. Finch (London: Nelson, 1965). Translations and section numberings are by Jesse Byock in *The Saga of the Volsungs* (London: Penguin Books,

strike first, the birds say, and were he to eat the heart, "*Þa mundi hann verða hverjum manni vitrari*" ("Then he'd be wiser than any man").[66] Sigurðr listens to their advice and kills the treacherous Regin (whom one bird compares to a wolf), consumes part of the dragon's heart, and seizes Fafnir's treasure hoard.[67] Performance enhanced.

Hrólfs saga kraka is rife with this flesh-and-blood mixing of warrior and animal. Froði, the half-elk, half-man son of the werbear Bjorn and his lover Bera (a fitting name that in Old Norse means "she-bear"), invites his brother Boðvar to drink blood from his animal portion, augmenting Boðvar's strength and making him a more capable fighter.[68] The greatest change in the saga, though, occurs to Hottr. We first meet him as the most marginalized member of Hrolfr's court, banished for his weakness to a corner of the hall where he is buried under a pile of animal bones thrown at him by the other retainers.[69] When a "*dyr*" ("wild beast") attacks Hrolfr's kingdom and starts killing livestock, Boðvar, in order to prove his loyalty to his new lord, forces Hottr to accompany him and slay the animal. Once that has been accomplished, Hottr is forced by Boðvar to eat the beast's heart and drink some of its blood, and this animal injection makes him a fearsome warrior. To celebrate this change and establish the former's weakling's new identity, King Hrolfr grants his

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1999).

[66] *Volsungasaga* 20.

[67] *Volsungasaga* 21. The bird says, "*Ok þar er mer ulfsins van, er ek eyrun sa*" ("I suspect a wolf where I see a wolf's ears").

[68] *Hrólfs saga kraka* 23. The Old Norse text of *Hrólfs saga kraka* is from *The Manuscripts of Hrólfs Saga Kraka*, ed. Desmond Slay (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960). Translations and chapter numbers are by Jesse Byock in *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki* (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

[69] Ibid.

reborn champion the name Hjalti.[70]

Fornaldarsögur like *Volsungasaga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka* imagine humans as able to combine with consumed animal bodies to form a more potent whole. The two sagas exhibit a quite literal rendering of what Derrida calls "carnophallogocentrism," the violence needed to be inflicted on animals to define the meat-consuming, masculine subject.[71] If animal imagery was used then not only to describe what humans were thought to be like but also to proscribe how they should act, these two sagas emphasize the need to destroy the chaotic animal forces that threaten the human community. For warriors to accomplish this, however, they needed to tame the ferocity of the self. An uncontrolled warrior was potentially more dangerous and unpredictable than a wild beast, more a detriment to humanity than an aid. He or she might have to be killed just like the animals.

We see three different ways that warriors could use their animality illustrated in the example of the Bjornssons of *Hrólfs saga kraka*. Each possesses a body that blends the human with the animal but to varying degrees, and interestingly, the two who possess actual animal appendages occupy opposite ends of the societal spectrum. Froði, an elk from the waist down, is the most isolated from the human community, living in the mountains and killing many of the travelers whom he encounters, sparing those he deems too weak to fight.[72] He is half an animal but seemingly only half an

[70] Ibid.
[71] For a discussion of "carnophallogocentrism," see above, 12-13.
[72] *Hrólfs saga kraka* 23.

outlaw. Þorir has only a single animal appendage, a hound's foot, which presumably he could keep hidden if he so desired. He uses his exceptional body to rise to the kingship of Gautland, where he rules admirably. The most somatically "average" of the three brothers, Boðvar, has no bestial body parts yet possesses a powerful link to the animal world in the form of his ursine fetch.[73] Controlling the fetch, however, leaves his physical body in a suspended state other humans cannot understand, and Hjalti awakens Boðvar from his hibernation, which banishes the bear Boðvar was using to defend his lord. Boðvar's tragedy is that, unlike his brothers, he cannot be man and animal simultaneously, and in the end, this separation leads to his death and the destruction of Hrolfr and his court.[74]

All three brothers, even Froði, possess a code of behavior that guides how they act, and as a result, the saga author sees them as rational beings. Other characters in Old Norse sagas were transformed by their animal urges into a subhuman state making them dangerous parts of society that needed to be eliminated in the way actual animal predators were. Berserkers (*O.N. berserkir*, believed to mean "bear-shirt") frequently illustrate this.[75] While in one of their earliest dated appearances, the poem

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[73] This is the *fylgja* (or "fetch"), which appears sporadically in the corpus of Old Norse. Andy Orchard defines *fylgjur* as "protective spirits…which attach themselves to individuals, often at birth, and remain with them right through death, when they may transfer their powers to another family member." See Andy Orchard, *Cassell's Dictionary of Norse Myth & Legend* (London: Cassell, 2002), 122-23. Glosecki calls the *fylgja* "among the strongest shamanic reflexes in the Germanic record" (*Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, 183) and argues for the presence of such a belief behind the Anglo-Saxon interest in animal guardians. See Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, 181-210.

[74] *Hrólfs saga kraka* 33.

[75] According to John Lindow, Snorri's assertion that berserkers do not wear armor into combat may have meant that Snorri believed *berserkr* to mean "bare shirt," but it is more likely that the term parallels *ulfheðnar* ("wolf skins"). See John Lindow, "Berserks," in *Medieval Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*, ed. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, and John Lindow (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2000), 93.

Haraldskvæði, they are portrayed as the loyal guardsmen of the king, the sagas usually depict them unfavorably as the animal in the warrior run amok.[76] Donning animal skins, usually that of a bear or wolf, they enter into a trance-like state during combat, fighting more like beast than man, ignoring the injuries inflicted on their bodies until slain.[77] They are fearsome combatants but unable to back up their boasts and often betray the lord they pledged their service to. They are ruled by their bodies, lusting after treasure and women, desires that overwhelm their adherence to the lord-retainer relationship. They serve as a warning to use one's physical might for the proper causes.[78]

To mature, to become a warrior who could benefit society and serve as an example to be followed, one needed to tame this ferocity, as we see illustrated in the episode from *Volsungasaga* when Sigmundr and his son, Sinfjotli, don the wolf skins.[79] Sigmundr's capacity for bestial violence and his ability to "become-wolf" had been established earlier in the saga during an attempt to kill him by his rival, the king Siggeir. The story goes like this: Siggeir betrays his own father-in-law, Volsungr, and slays him in battle, capturing Volsungr's ten sons, including Sigmundr. Siggeir, at his wife (and sister of Sigmundr) Signy's request, places Sigmundr and his brothers in stocks in the forest where they are eaten one by one on successive nights by an "*ylgr*

[76] Ibid., 92-93.
[77] Ibid., 93.
[78] For a discussion on the berserker figure and his (as beserks are usually men) desire for women, see Benjamin Blaney, "The Berserk Suitor: Application of a Stereotyped Theme," *Scandinavian Studies* 54 (1982): 279-94.
[79] *Volsungasaga* 8.

ein" ("old she-wolf") until only Sigmundr is left. Signy orders her trusted servant to place honey on Sigmundr's face to trick the wolf into licking him, and when the wolf gets close and sticks its tongue into the human's mouth, Sigmundr bites the tongue off, killing the animal.[80] Sigmundr plots revenge with his son, but the saga notes that "*Sigmundi pykkir Sinfjötli of ungr til hefnda með sér, ok vill nú fyrst venja hann með nokkut harðræði*" ("Sigmund thought Sinfjotli too young to seek vengeance with him, and that he first wanted to accustom the boy to hardship").[81]

The turning point for Sinfjotli is the donning of the skins, which teaches the younger Volsung the difference between a self-destructive, reckless animality and a ferocity that can be usefully harnessed in battle. Sigmundr and Sinfjotli discover the skins when traveling through the forests, where they kill men for their treasure. They find a house with two princes sleeping inside. The princes are under the curse of the skins, which can only be taken off every ten days, and it happens to be the tenth day. The two Volsungs take the skins for themselves and continue their pillaging, splitting up and agreeing to call on the other (in the speech of wolves) if they encounter a band of warriors too numerous to fight alone. The pelts increase Sigmundr and Sinfjotli's physical capabilities, but their reason, their very humanity, is threatened in the process. When the younger Sinfjotli ignores Sigmundr's order and attacks a large force alone, Sigmundr viciously maims Sinfjotli for not following his directions, biting him in the

[80] *Volsungasaga* 5.
[81] *Volsungasaga* 8.

throat and endangering his son's life. This violation of kinship bonds shocks Sigmundr out of his irrational behavior and causes him to recognize the danger associated with the skins. The two finally rid themselves of their accouterments when the tenth day arrives.[82] *Volsungasaga* notes of Sigmundr and Sinfjotli that "*Ok i þeim oskopum unnu þeir morg frægðarverk i riki Siggeirs konungs*" ("While under that curse they had carried out many daring exploits in King Siggeir's territory"), but both men learn the threats that accompany the possession of such power.[83] With his lupine experience over, the young Sinfjotli matures as a warrior and is ready to achieve the vengeance against Siggeir that he and his father desire.

We can see something like "becoming" taking place in these two *fornaldarsögur*. Sigmundr, in defending himself against the old she-wolf, must entire into a state neither human nor animal to save his life. Along with Sinfjotli, he then dons the wolfskins, fighting like wild animals and speaking in the language of wolves. The difference is that Sigmundr retains something of his human wisdom and rationality while Sinfjotli begins a process where his humanity ebbs away. Sigmundr can understand that ferality presents a great danger to their lives. One can see in their need to remove the skins and eliminate their wolfishness a hesitance toward or even fear of an animal Other. This, along with Boðvar's awakening by Hjalti in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, would be the kind of failures that Deleuze and Guattari lament, lines of flight

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

cut off by societal restrictions and prejudices. In both instances, though, I would argue that sagas saw these losses as in some way lamentable. For Sinfjotli, his wolfishness would have been valuable had he been experienced enough to wield it, and for Boðvar, the loss of his fetch is the result of human misunderstanding toward such a liminal figure. While both sagas require the sacrifice of either real animals or self-animality to keep society running, they also keep open the possibility of an affirmative relationship with beasts. Can we see this too in the heroic literature of Anglo-Saxon England? We look now to *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* for answers.

Under the Sea with Beowulf

Where do monsters lurk today? While their shapes and sizes may now be different, we place them in many of the same spaces the Anglo-Saxons did: in the swamps, the deserts, the mountains, and the woods, those areas largely uninhabited by humans. Like the Anglo-Saxons, we also see them emerging from the heavens, though given the scientific knowledge we have gained about the possibility of extraterrestrial life, aliens from faraway galaxies now threaten from the sky rather than devils[84] and dragons.[85]

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[84] For the early Christian idea that devils were banished to the lower skies, see Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 70-73.

[85] The E version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 793 tells how "*Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norþanhymbra land on þæt folc earmlic bregdon: þæt wæron ormete þodenas ond ligrescas, ond geseowene fyrene dracan wæron on þam lyfte fleogende. Þam tacnum sona fyligde mycel hunger, ond litel æfter þam þæs ilcan geares on .vi. idus Ianuarii earmlice heðenra manna hergung adiligode Godes cyrican in Lindisfarenaee þurh reaflac ond manslehť* ("At this time, dire portents came over the land of Northumbria and terrified that people miserably: These were immeasurable violent winds and flashes of lighting, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. These signs were soon followed by a great hunger, and a little after in the same year on the eighth of January, the plundering of the heathen men wretchedly destroyed the church of God in Lindisfarne through robbery and manslaughter"). The text is from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. Susan Irvine, Vol. 7: MS E (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 42.

And then there was the sea. To the Anglo-Saxons, it offered opportunity, including routes for trading, bones for carving caskets and binding books, and plentiful sources of food. But it also kept its mysteries. It was a space unconquerable by man, impossible to permanently inhabit, often dangerous to cross, and where the monstrous could dwell unseen. In Chapter 1, we saw how the Anglo-Saxons (or at least some Anglo-Saxons, like the fisherman in Ælfric's *Colloquy*) were terrified of whales and other large sea creatures. Hiding beneath the surface of the water, a place where light did not penetrate, the beasts were thought able to strike from the depths at any time, which is one reason they were compared to the spectral Satan and his frightening "*heolophelm*" in *The Whale*.[86] It is a fear that we share with the early medieval world, as our technology has still not allowed us to map the deepest seas. Just as the Anglo-Saxons had their diabolic *Fastitocolon* and their *niceras*, we have our own legendary aquatic beasts, whether the fabled Loch Ness Monster,[87] the shark Jaws,[88] or the ultrafauna (Japanese *kaiju*) that populate Toho's Godzilla series[89] and Guillermo del Toro's 2013 film *Pacific Rim*.[90]

If the ocean can still be imagined today as uncontrollable and its wildlife hostile to man, one can understand how terrifyingly it could be depicted over 1,000 years ago

[86] See above, 75-76.
[87] There is a medieval tie to the Loch Ness Monster. Believers in Nessie have pointed to Adomnan's *Life of Saint Columba* as proof that the creature (or at least its descendent) was alive over 1,500 years ago. In II.28, Columba learns of a monster in the river Ness that has killed a local man. Columba instructs one of his followers to cross the river, and when the monster threatens the man, the saint uses his holy power to drive the beast away.
[88] *Jaws*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (1975; Universal City, CA: Universal Studio Home Entertainment, 2012), Blu-ray.
[89] The first film in this series is *Gojira*, directed by Ishiro Honda (1954; New York: Criterion Collection, 2012), Blu-ray.
[90] *Pacific Rim*, directed by Guillermo del Toro (2013; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2013), Blu-ray.

by the Anglo-Saxons. Because of its chaotic nature, the sea was considered a testing ground and a means of challenging the self, a function it plays in some hagiographic narratives and elegiac poems. This is the role of the sea in *Beowulf*. The youthful hero's trials in the ocean and his struggle with its inhabitants aids him in fashioning his identity as a warrior, maturing him into the sort of fighter who can believably claim to be able to cleanse Heorot of the monstrous Grendel. One might even say the swimming contest with Breca is when the adolescent Beowulf passes into manhood.[91] Heidi Estes believes the ocean in *Beowulf* "is the imagined sea of the author and/or scribe of *Beowulf* rather than the observed sea of the actual traveller."[92] I agree, but with a caveat: The sea was only observable on its *surface* to an Anglo-Saxon traveler. It is this imperceptibility of the oceans that grants the poet the imaginative space needed to depict one of the more fantastical becomings in the text and the Old English corpus as a whole, a "becoming-whale" (or at least "becoming-aquatic-killer-beast") imagined through Beowulf's body.

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[91] Neville writes, "From Beowulf's, the Danes' and presumably, an Anglo-Saxon audience's perspective, this triumph over the natural world positively distinguishes him from other people and is used as an item on Beowulf's heroic *curriculum vitae* to identify as someone whom Hrothgar should take seriously" (*Representations of the Natural World,* 132). Similarly, Heidi Estes notes how "This journey through watery depths, from which Beowulf is lifted by the waves onto the shore of Finland, could be interpreted as a metaphorical (re-)birth into manhood." Heidi Estes, "*Beowulf* and the Sea: An Ecofeminist Reading" in *Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, 217.

[92] Estes, "*Beowulf* and the Sea," 215. Estes believes the Anglo-Saxon relationship with the sea can be illuminated by the American ecocritic Lawrence Buell's distinction between "space" and "place." As Estes summarizes, "'place' is marked with human habitation, layered with human memories, textured with information about its features and about the humans who have lived in it, and might include homes, graves, and agricultural locations. 'Space,' on the other hand, is abstract, largely unknown, lacking in personal memories, and unmarked by human activity" (Ibid., 214). Estes suggests that some Anglo-Saxons would have seen the ocean as "place." While I certainly agree that some Anglo-Saxons were more comfortable on the waves than others, I am wary of associating the sea with those "places" that Estes uses as examples in the above quote, all of which are on solid ground. The tempestuousness of the ocean gave it a danger (no doubt thrilling to some) that resists the kind of stability that could be associated with homes or farms. For Buell's contrast of "space" and "place," see his *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 63-71.

Details about the swimming contest first emerge after Beowulf arrives at Heorot and is greeted unwarmly by a naysayer in the Danish hall, Unferth.[93] Unferth attempts to use the swimming contest, which he labels a "*sorhfullne sið*" ("sorrowful journey"), as a means to portray the Geat as stubborn and weak, a warrior incapable of matching strength with Grendel.[94] He accuses Beowulf of undertaking the contest "*for wlence*" ("for pride")[95] and "*for dolgilpe*" ("for foolish boasting"),[96] and, most importantly, losing the contest to Breca. But Unferth's attempt as dishonoring Beowulf before the Danish court ultimately fails. Beowulf corrects Unferth with his own version of the story, noting that his accuser left out or mischaracterized many important details about this adventure:

> Soð ic talige,
> þæt ic mere-strengo maran ahte,
> eafeþo on yþum, ðonne ænig oþer man.
> Wit þæt gecwædon cniht-wesende
> ond gebeotedon (wæron begen þa git
> on geogoð-feore) þæt wit on garsecg ut
> aldrum neðdon, ond þæt geæfndon swa.
> Hæfdon swurd nacod, þa wit on sund reon,

[93] Some have argued that being a "naysayer" and verbally testing the mettle of those who entered the hall was a job duty of sorts for the *þyle*. See Carol Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþh Episode," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 460.
[94] Ln. 512a.
[95] Ln. 508a.
[96] Ln. 509a.

heard on handa; wit unc wið hron-fixas

werian þohton. (532b-541a)

["I consider it the truth that I possessed greater strength in the sea, power on the waves, than any other person. Being boys, we two said and boasted (we were both then still in our youth) that we would venture our lives out on the sea, and so we carried that out. We had bare swords, hard in hand, when we swam in the sea; we thought to protect ourselves against whales. "]

Beowulf does not deny that his troubles on the sea were the result of a boast, and if there was any fault in taking the journey, he claims, it was due to inexperience, as he and Breca spoke "*cnihtwesende*" ("being boys") and "*on geogoðfeore*" ("in youth"). The boys' motive is not clearly defined, as all we are told is that the two risked their lives, but like any athletic contest, it involved a testing of one's abilities against another, and it may have been an attempt to please or impress those who doubted their potential, especially if it is the same episode Beowulf recounts in lines 419-422b when first addressing Hrothgar.[97] In those lines, Beowulf, seeking to establish his credentials as a fighter capable of taking on Grendel, claims to have fought a tribe of giants and killed a number of sea-monsters in his younger days. "The implication," Neville writes, "is

[97] In discussing how the elder Geats told him he should go to Hrothgar, Beowulf mentions that

selfe ofersawon ða ic of searwum cwom
fah from feondum, þær ic fife geband,
yðde eotena cyn, ond on yðum slog
niceras nihtes

["They themselves looked on when I came from battles, stained with the blood of enemies, where I bound five, destroyed a race of giants, and on the waves killed sea monsters at night."]

that success in battle is not enough to distinguish Beowulf from other strong warriors. Such distinction requires success against the natural superior power."[98]

Assuming the two aquatic combats are the same, then Beowulf's struggle against the animals of the sea was the opportunity he believed he needed to define himself as a capable warrior and pass into adulthood. It is no coincidence that the moment would emerge in a conflict with the beasts, especially animals as dangerous as those that roamed the seas. As we saw in Ælfric's *Colloquy*, the sort of sea creatures Beowulf struggles against (identified variously as *hronfixas, merefixas, meredeor*, and *niceras*) could be portrayed as especially destructive beasts, able to destroy a ship and its sailors in a single blow.[99] Attempts have been made to identify Beowulf's assailants with an exact species of whale or other cetacean, but no matter the species, they respond aggressively to Beowulf's entry into their domain.[100] Beowulf then goes on to describe the circumstances that separated him from Breca and the beginning of his battle with the sea-beasts:

No he wiht fram me
flod-yþum feor fleotan meahte,
hraþor on holme, no ic fram him wolde.

[98] Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, 129.
[99] See above, 68-70.
[100] See W.G. Cooke, "'Hronas' and 'Hronfixas'," *Notes and Queries* 18.7 (July 1971): 245-47. Cooke argues for the animals that Beowulf fights being cetaceans, and notes that "in northern waters the one mammal or mammal-like fish that will readily do so is the grampus," which is another name for the orca or killer whale. I agree that this is a possibility, but I disagree with Cooke's view that the term "*hronfisc*" means that the poet imagined Beowulf's enemies as "no bigger than the common porpoises he knew from English harbours"; at 247. Estes argues that the identification of the sea-beasts as "*niceras*" is intended to "[make] the sea strange, and this estrangement renders the sea space rather than place" ("*Beowulf* and the Sea," 216). For a discussion of the "place" vs. "space" distinction, see above, 116n92.

Ða wit ætsomne on sæ wæron
fif-nihta fyrst, oþ þæt unc flod todraf,
wado weallende, wedera cealdost,
niþende niht, ond norþan wind
heaðo-grim ondhwearf; hreo wæron yþa.
Wæs mere-fixa mod onhrered;
þær me wið laðum lic-syrce min,
heard, hond-locen, helpe gefremede,
beado-hrægl broden on breostum læg
golde gegyrwed. Me to grunde teah
fah feond-scaða, fæste hæfde
grim on grape. Hwæþre me gyfeþe wearð
þæt ic aglæcan orde geræhte,
hilde-bille. Heaþo-ræs fornam
mihtig mere-deor þurh mine hand. (541b-558)

["He was unable to float far at all from me on the flood-waves. We were then together in the ocean for the space of five nights until the sea separated us, the waters welling, coldest of storms, the night growing dark, and the fierce wind turned from the north; the waves were rough. The temper of the sea-fishes was stirred up; there my armor, hard, linked by hand, gave me help against the enemies; the woven war-garment garnished by gold lay on my breast. A hostile foe drew me to the ocean floor,

had me fast in its fierce grasp. Yet it was granted to me that I reached the assailant with the weapon's point, a war-sword. The storm of battle took the mighty sea-beast through my hand. "]

Much of the critical attention paid to this passage has focused on whether Beowulf's adventure with Breca is really a "swimming contest" at all, with Fred C. Robinson suggesting the two are rowing instead.[101] Unferth notes in 512b that Beowulf and Breca "*on sund reon*," and the debate has been whether to take "*reon*" (Bosworth-Toller defines the word as "to go by water, to row or sail") metaphorically as referring to swimming or literally as traveling in a seagoing vessel. If he is indeed rowing, then Beowulf becomes a less superhuman and more "realistic" Geatish hero and the narrative as a whole less fantastic. There have been several challenges to this theory, such as the argument that similar swimming contests can be found in Scandinavian, Germanic, and Irish narratives.[102]

Either way, Beowulf's involuntary trip to the "*grund*" offers less difficulty in

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[101] Fred C. Robinson, "Elements of the Marvellous in the Characterization of Beowulf: A Reconsideration," in *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 126-27. For this view, see also James W. Earl, "Beowulf's Rowing-Match" *Neophilologus* 63 (1979): 285-90 and Roberta Frank, "'Mere' and 'Sund': Two Sea-Changes in *Beowulf*" in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Georgia Ronan Crampton, and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 158-65. An overview of the debate is provided by R.D. Fulk, "Afloat in Semantic Space: Old English *sund* and the Nature of Beowulf's Exploit with Breca," *JEGP* 104.4 (2005): 456-72. Regarding "*sund*," Fulk concludes that "Whether the boys swam or rowed cannot be determined on the basis of this word, and the critical assumption that the word must denote one thing or the other, or that juggling two meanings for the word at once is necessarily a rhetorical feat, is a product of the way that our own language constructs for us conceptual categories that are in all likelihood simply ethnocentric"; at 472.

[102] See Peter A. Jorgensen, "Beowulf's Swimming Contest with Breca: Old Norse Parallels," *Folklore* 89.1 (1978): 52-59; Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 125-28; Martin Puhvel, "The Swimming Prowess of Beowulf," *Folklore* 82 (Winter 1971): 276-80; Martin Puhvel, *Beowulf and Celtic Tradition* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), 61-72; Martin Puhvel, "The Aquatic Contest in *Halfdanar saga Bronufostra* and Beowulf's Adventure with Breca: Any Connection?" *NM* 99 (1998): 131-38.

interpreting its realism (or lack thereof), and his fight there may be the part of the contest he wants his audience to remember best. "*Grund*," according to the *DOE*, can mean "solid bottom or earth underlying something," with specific reference to the "bottom of the sea or a body of water," which is how the database glosses 553b.[103] This presents a problem to those attempting to reduce the supernatural elements of the passage. Even if Beowulf were the Houdini of the early Scandinavian world, there is no way an average human could believably hold his or her breath all the way to the seafloor, engage in battle there, and survive. The appearance of "*grund*" then helps to establish the hero as a force greater than human, as Beowulf's "becoming-*merefisc*." Beowulf's struggle with the sea creatures shows him as a being of intensities, akin to the beasts in some ways but also human in his social obligations, desires, and use of tools. Like his struggle against Grendel, and to a lesser extent his fights with Grendel's Mother and the dragon, Beowulf's battle with his undersea assailants blends him and his antagonists.[104] The hero's ability to survive while underwater and fight in the ocean, part of the "*merestrengo maran*" ("greater strength of the seas") and "*eafeðo on yðum*" ("strength on the waves") he claims to possess, are more animal than human qualities. His humanity, however, is defined in part by a trait animals do not possess: a use of technology. Beowulf's armor, which he describes almost like a living being for

[103] *DOE Online* s.v. *grund* B1. The interpretation of "*grund*" has been a matter of debate too, although Oren Falk, agreeing with the *DOE*, concludes that it likely means "seafloor" here. See Oren Falk, "Beowulf's Longest Day: The Amphibious Hero in His Element (*Beowulf*, ll. 1495b-96)," *JEGP* 106.1 (2007): 6-7.
[104] For a discussion of the blending of Beowulf and his opponents in the other three monster fights, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 31-33.

the assistance it provides (as it "*helpe gefremede*," "performed help"), serves as a reminder of humans' supposed exclusive ingenuity and artifice (as animals were not believed to make tools) and an expression of the control humans desired over the natural world, according to Robinson.[105] Beowulf's armor will protect his body from his swordless opponents, and his sword will dispatch his armorless foes.

The resolution of Beowulf's sea battle occurs in the next few lines:

> Swa mec gelome lað-geteonan
> þreatedon þearle. Ic him þenode
> deoran sweorde, swa hit gedefe wæs.
> Næs hie ðære fylle gefean hæfdon,
> man-fordædlan, þæt hie me þegon,
> symbel ymbsæton sæ-grunde neah,
> ac on mergenne mecum wunde
> be yð-lafe uppe lægon,
> sweordum aswefede, þæt syðþan na
> ymb brontne ford brim-liðende
> lade ne letton. (559-569a)

["Thus, evil-doers frequently pressed me severely. I served them with a precious sword, as it was fitting. They by no means had the joy of their feast, those malefactors, that they consumed me, sat around at a feast near the seafloor, but in the

[105] Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 73.

morning, they lay up by the shore wounded by blades, put to sleep by swords, so that after they would never hinder seafarers around the steep water-way."]

This passage is celebrated for its playful take on feasting imagery.[106] Beowulf imagines himself as the main course, a meal for wild animals as humans could sometimes be. They want to "*þicgan*" ("consume") him, but Beowulf then treats them to a "*deoran sweorde*" ("precious sword," and perhaps a pun on "*deor*," or "animal"), a manmade object, and he seems to recognize the irony of the feasting situation himself when he notes that his destruction of the beasts "*gedefe wæs*" ("was fitting"). Beowulf the rhetorician may be playing on a common association of large animals, especially sea creatures, with gluttony (as we saw in *The Whale*).[107] The anthropomorphism of imagining these animals at a feast must have been wildly entertaining, but the animals were at the same time a very real, embodied threat. In many anthropomorphic texts (such as comic strips), animals are placed in human social situations as a way of making a social or political statement, but the text does not intend for its audience to see the animal's acquisition of human attributes to be problematic, to call the human-animal distinction into question. The anthropomorphism is so extreme that no one would believe animals "really act like that."[108] *Beowulf*'s sea creatures, on the other hand, were believed to eat humans, and so their feasting must be shown as a mockery lest it question human supremacy. Their comeuppance would be seen as Beowulf

[106] See James L. Rosier, "The Uses of Association: Hands and Feasts in *Beowulf*," *PMLA* 78 (1963): 9-10.
[107] See above, 76-78.
[108] On this logic of comic strips, see Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, 120-61.

setting the natural world right, much like he will set Heorot right by expelling Grendel from it.

Beowulf is able to emerge from the ocean after this fight, but his conquest of the seas has another consequence. The Geat's defeat of the sea monsters cleanses the ocean, opening it up for human exploitation by allowing travelers who were previously harassed by the animals to now have safe passage. As Estes writes, "Beowulf reinscribes this seascape as a different kind of 'place,' one that is safe for his fellow humans to travel on because he has slaughtered its original inhabitants."[109] The animals' dominance of the sea challenged the superiority of the human, and Beowulf's success there reaffirms human superiority. This appears to have resulted in something of an epiphany for the young warrior, teaching him what his responsibility was to be: a protector of humans and a liberator of contested spaces, defending against the encroachment of what was understood as the subhuman. A touch of the observable is added here too with the mention that the slain sea monsters wash up on the shore after their "feast" with Beowulf. Members of both audiences (the imagined one in the Danish hall and the Anglo-Saxon one hearing the poem) could have come across dead cetaceans that had washed up on shore or at least heard stories of such. Looking at the massive creature, they could have been reminded of heroism like Beowulf's. They would be thankful for warriors like the Geat who could liberate the seas and provide an animal resource valuable for its blubber and bones.

[109] Estes, "*Beowulf* and the Sea," 216.

With his animalistic violence, Beowulf at first generates peace and prosperity, though his tragedy is that he will not always be able to do so since old age will sap his physical strength and speed. In the first half of the poem, he is a capable warrior able to perform feats reminiscent of nonhumans. While he is biologically a human, his success is generated by animal acts and material objects that are expressly not of the average human body. Technology that adorns him, like his "*swurd nacod*" ("bare sword") and expertly made "*beadohræġl*"(*DOE* "coat of mail, literally 'battle-garment'"), helps save him from the sea monsters. Beowulf, though, must also traverse animal spaces and act in many ways like a sea beast himself, a "becoming-*merefisc*," a role he will take on again later in the poem when he battles Grendel's Mother, twice referred to as a "*brimwylf*" ("sea-wolf"), itself an intensity between states.[110] His conflict with the monsters occurs in the "*nipende niht*" ("darkening night"), a nonhuman time on the ocean given the lack of light. His ability to remain in the waters for days is a bestial trait as is his ability to fight on the "*grund*" of the ocean. The editors of the poem suggest the sea monsters in *Beowulf* reflect a greater fascination with "such fearsome creatures in the imagination of people of the early Northern world," a curiosity expressed through the figureheads of ships, for instance.[111] If this is the case, and I believe it is, then I would argue it is because the chaos of the sea created in the Anglo-Saxons a desire to be like those animals but also to dominate them and conquer their

[110] Lns. 1506a and 1599a.
[111] Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 154n575f.

space, to be better sea monsters than actual sea monsters.

Beowulf is imagined as bestial throughout the rest of the poem. He will battle sans human technology with Grendel, entering into an almost feral state to grapple with his adversary. It is a mentality the poem calls "*bolgenmod*" (a much-discussed term the *DOE* defines as "enraged"), and Beowulf fights Grendel, as some believe, like a bear.[112] He maims Grendel as an animal would, and he later crushes the Swedish warrior Dæghrefn ("Dayraven," a human opponent with an animal name) with only his hands, noting that "*ne wæs ecg bona, / ac him hildegrap heortan wylmas,/ banhus gebræc*" ("a sword was not the slayer, but a battle-grasp broke his body, the wellings of his heart,").[113] Yet such "becomings" were not limited to the heroes of Germanic and Scandinavian legend. They could be imagined in biblical heroes as well, even involving an animal that might have been the most maligned beast in Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

Hunting Like the Wolf

It may seem like a surprising choice to turn to *Genesis A* when discussing animality and its role in the construction of warrior identity in Old English verse. Unlike *Exodus* and *Daniel*, the Old Testament-inspired poems that follow it in MS Junius 11, *Genesis*

[112] The first to identify the Bear's Son Tale as a possible analogue to *Beowulf* was Friedrich Panzer in *Studien zur germanischen sagengeschichte*, Vol. 1: *Beowulf* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1910), and it, along with the idea that the hero fights like a bear more more generally, has become the starting point for a great deal of secondary literature. See especially J. Michael Stitt, *'Beowulf' and the Bear's Son: Epic, Saga, and Fairytale in Northern Germanic Tradition*, Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Tradition 8 (New York: Garland Publications, 1992). See also Glosecki, *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, 200-210; Orchard, *Critical Companion to Beowulf*, 121; Owen-Crocker, "Beast Men," 271-74; Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, xxxvii-xxxviii; Peter A. Jorgensen, "The Two-Troll Variant of the Bear's Son Folktale in *Halfdanar saga Bronufostra* and *Grims saga loðinkinna*," *Arv* 31 (1975): 35-43; Arthur A. Wachsler, "Grettir's Fight with a Bear: Another Neglected Analogue of *Beowulf* in the *Grettis Sag[a] Asmundarsonar*," *ES* 66 (1985): 381-90.
[113] Lns. 2506b-2508a.

A usually sticks closely to its source, the first 22 chapters of Genesis in the Vulgate.[114] The most famous animal of Genesis is the diabolic serpent who tempts Eve, but when animals appear in the narrative at other points, they are often depicted as resources for man to exploit, named with general terms in the Old English like "*heofonfuglas*" ("birds of heaven") and "*wildu deor*" ("wild beasts") that stick closely to the Latin original.[115]

But animals also show up in *Genesis A* when its poet found room to improvise a little, to add heroic imagery to the narrative and elaborate on the story in a way that would be pleasing to the imagination of himself and his audience. Remarking on this desire of the poet, A.N. Doane notes that "*Genesis A* has a bifurcated pedigree, deriving its subject from traditions that were sacred, bookish, and foreign and its technique from traditions that were pagan, oral, and familiar."[116] This pairing would appeal to an ecclesiastical audience, one deep in sacred learning but who retained a taste for secular heroic legend, and the "pagan, oral" background would be capable of resonating with "a largely illiterate and traditional audience," including an aristocratic elite who would enjoy seeing their warrior culture present in the biblical past.[117] The most remarkable example of this move in *Genesis A* is an episode referred to today as

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[114] On the relationship of the poem to its Vulgate and Old Latin sources, see A.N. Doane, *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2013), 77-87, especially 77-79, and Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse: Studies in* Genesis, Exodus, *and* Daniel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 98-149.
[115] Lns. 1515b-1516a. Genesis 9.2 refers to them as "*volucres caeli*" ("birds of heaven") and "*animalia terrae*" ("animals of the earth"), respectively.
[116] Doane, *Genesis A*, 61.
[117] Ibid., 71. As Doane notes, "There was at the time when *Genesis A* was most likely composed probably little to distinguish the culture of the laity and the clergy" (*Genesis A*, 70-71).

the "Battle of the Northern Kings," a section adapted from the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. In it, a group of wicked kings, led by the ruler of the Elamites, Chedorlaomer (O.E. *Orlahomar*), put down a revolt against their rule by Sodom and Gomorrah. They conquer and enslave those cities' resistant subjects, including Abraham's nephew, Lot. When a survivor informs Abraham about these events, the patriarch springs into action to save his captured kinsman.

The struggle against a foreign invader is a favorite tale in Old English writing, appearing in works like *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and the historical poems dealing with the Viking invasions, most prominently the *Battle of Brunanburh* and the *Battle of Maldon*. When the *Genesis A* poet looked to expand the biblical account of this episode in a way that would appeal to his contemporaries and establish parallels between the Anglo-Saxons and Israelites, the imagery of heroic verse was a powerful means to accomplish this. For instance, the warriors of Sodom and Gomorrah are described as "*wergend/ byrda and beaga*" ("defenders of brides and rings"),[118] and the nefarious Chedorlaomer, like any effective Germanic king, demands his foes "*gombon gieldan and gafol sellan*" ("pay a tax and give tribute").[119] The "noise of battle" motif occurs when the Elamites first attack, as the poem states that the "*francan wæron hlude*" ("spears were

[118] Lns. 1971b-1972a.
[119] Ln. 1978. While looting itself is not usually condemned in Anglo-Saxon thought, there was a problem with doing it for greedy reasons, for intending the treasure solely for personal benefit by a select few rather than spreading the wealth around to ensure a tranquil community and gain honor, a trait of a good leader. See Peter Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence in Beowulf* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 35-76.

loud")[120] and later describes a "*wigcyrm micel,/hlud hildesweg*" ("great shout of war, a loud battle-sound").[121] One of the beasts of battle appear when the poem describes how "*Sang se wanna fugel / under deoreðsceaftum, deawigfeðera, / hræs on wenan*" ("The dark bird sang under the spear-shafts, dewy-feathered, in expectation of a corpse").[122] The raven's purpose here is to build anticipation for the gruesome slaughter that is shortly to come.

Those familiar with the conventions of heroic verse might have wondered if any of the raven's associates would appear. The eagle is seemingly nowhere to be found (unless it is the bird identified as the "*nefugle*" in line 2159b).[123] But the other beast of battle, the wolf, does in fact show up, although not as an actual animal like the raven. Instead, the audience's ears might have perked up a little when this wolf image appeared in a passage describing the aftermath of the battle:

Hæfde wig-sigor
Elamitarna ordes wisa
weold wæl-stowe. Gewat seo wæpna laf
fæsten secan. Fynd gold strudon,
ahyðdan þa mid herge hord-burh wera,
Sodoman and Gomorran, þa sæl ageald,
mæra ceastra. Mægð siðedon,

[120] Ln. 1982b.
[121] Lns. 1990b-1991a.
[122] Lns. 1983b-1985a.
[123] BT defines "*nefugol*" as "a bird that feeds on carrion, a vulture or crow."

fæmnan and wuduwan, freondum beslægene,
from hleow-stole. Hettend læddan
ut mid æhtum Abrahames mæg
of Sodoma byrig. We þæt soð magon
secgan furður, hwelc siððan wearð,
æfter þæm gehnæste, here-wulfa sið,
þara þe læddon Loth and leoda god,
suð-monna sinc, sigore gulpon. (2003b-2017)

["The chief of the Elamites' army had victory in battle, held the battlefield. The survivors of weapons left to seek a stronghold. The enemies then carried off gold, plundered the hord-cities of men, the great cities Sodom and Gomorra, with the army, when the opportunity offered. The maidens journeyed, the virgins and widows, deprived of friends, from their home. The enemies led the kinsman of Abraham out from the city of Sodom along with his possessions. We are able to speak of that truth further, what came after the conflict, the fate of the battle-wolves, those who boasting of victory led away Lot and the goods of the people, the treasures of the southmen."] The type of wolfishness that appears here is uncommon in the Beasts of Battle topos.[124] The poet, aware that his audience might have expected a wolf after the mention of the raven, chose to present that animal in the form of a kenning for the armies of the northern kings. The characterization works on a number of different

[124] For more on wolfish humans in the *Battle of Maldon*, see below, 147n16.

levels. Like wolves, who inhabit the woods, the Elamite armies attack from outside "civilized" space (i.e. space inhabited by Judeo-Christians). Instead of a wolf eating the remains of a slain warrior (or anticipating such a meal at least) as it normally does in the motif, these *herewulfas* are picking at the corpse of an entire people who, after being decimated in combat, are as defenseless as a lifeless body.[125] The uncontrollable violence and greed commonly associated with the wolf also is displayed by the Elamites, the extremity of the former trait stressed by the poem's emphasis on the violence they commit against women, a fact unmentioned in the Vulgate.[126] Just as wolves were recognized as predating on livestock, the most passive and defenseless of beasts, these human wolves, once the defenders are dead, predate on those humans considered most in need of protection.

This wolfish imagery elicited fear and disgust in an audience hearing the poem, who would have seen firsthand the devastation that the animal could cause to their (or their community's) livestock.[127] But what makes *Genesis A* unique is that another wolf image appears just a few lines later. I believe this is the only instance in the corpus of Old English poetry where the same animal is used twice in a single poem to

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[125] It is tempting to try and read "*herewulfas*" as a description meant to recall the Viking invasions of the late eighth century, especially given Doane's hypothesis, based on the dating criteria established by R.D. Fulk, that the poem may be a product of early ninth century Northumbria, the region that saw the sacking of Lindisfarne in 793 and sporadic attacks in the decades following. On the dating of *Genesis A,* see Doane, *Genesis A*, 51-55. See also R.D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 392.

[126] The biblical Genesis only mentions the presence of women after Abraham has already defeated his enemies, noting in 14.16, "*Reduxitque omnem substantiam et Loth, fratrem suum, cum substantia illius, mulieres quoque et populum*" ("And he brought back all the substance and Lot, his brother, with his substance, the women also and the people").

[127] Pluskowski believes that wolf attacks might have generated an emotional response among those Anglo-Saxons who found their livestock and even their canines dead and mutiliated. See Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness*, 73-93, especially 79-83 and 89-93.

simultaneously define and separate different groups of people. Having been told of Lot's defeat and capture, Abraham and his lieutenants devise a plan to liberate the captured folk of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Elamites. The passage describing the lead-up to the battle reads:

> Þa se halga heht his heorð-werod
> wæpna onfon. He þær wigena fand,
> æsc-berendra, eahatyne,
> and þreohund eac þeoden-holdra,
> þara þe he wiste þæt meahte wel æghwylc
> on fyrd wegan fealwe linde.
> Him þa Abraham gewat and þa eorlas þry
> þe him ær treowe sealdon mid heora folce getrume;
> wolde his mæg huru,
> Loth alynnan of laðscipe.
> Rincas wæron rofe, randas wægon,
> forð fromlice on fold-wege.
> Hilde-wulfas here-wicum neh
> gefaren hæfdon. Þa he his frum-garan,
> wis-hydig wer, wordum sægde,
> Þares afera, him wæs þearf micel
> þæt hie on twa healfe

grimme guð-gemot gystum eowdon

heardne hand-plegan; cwæð þæt him se halga,

ece drihten, eaðe mihte

æt þam spere-niðe spede lænan.

Þa ic neðan gefrægn under niht-scuwan

hæleð to hilde. (2039-61a)

["The holy one then ordered his band of retainers to take up weapons. He found there three hundred and eighteen warriors, spearbearers, loyal to their lord, each of whom he knew could well bear a dusky shield in the army. Then Abraham departed with the three men who to him had earlier given a promise and with their army; indeed, he wished to set free his kinsman Lot from misfortune. The warriors were brave and carried their shields eagerly forward on the path. The battle-wolves had traveled near the military camps. The man wise in thought, Terah's son, then said words to his chieftains, that to him it was a great need that they show themselves to their enemies on two sides in the fierce battle, the hard handplay. The holy one said that the eternal Lord could easily grant them success at the spear-battle. I have heard that the warriors then dared to go to battle under the cover of night."]

The *hildewulfas* ("battle wolves") of 2151a have been taken by most to be another mention of the Elamites, and this makes some sense on the surface.[128] The usual

[128] Cf. Jennifer Neville, who agrees that the *hildewulfas* are the Israelites, writing, "The Old English *Genesis*, interestingly, links the virtuous Abraham and his loyal thegns with the same sub-human, superhuman power; violent force need not always be negative," but she does not explore in any detail why wolfishness was chosen as a particular trait of the

reasoning is that wolfishness is almost always a negative characterization in Old English poetry and commonly associated with criminality or other social aberrance.[129] While some exceptions occur (*Beowulf* seems to portray the Geatish warrior Wulf in a positive light), wolfishness is for the most part attributed to humans who are greedy, violent, manipulative, or heathen (and usually all four). In addition, there is the argument, made by Andy Orchard, that re-emphasizing the wolfishness of the Elamites would fit into a pattern of verbal doubling in the poem that links the two halves of the episode (before and after Abraham enters it) and is meant to reinforce its thematic concerns.[130] Finally, mentioning the location of the enemy as "*neh herewicum*" ("near the military camps") right after a line about Abraham's troop preparing to fight could have heightened suspense for the battle to come by reminding the audience of the presence and danger the Elamites pose to the patriarch and his men.

Yet I believe that it is Abraham and his warriors who are our "*hildewulfas"* and that what we have here is an Anglo-Saxon instance of "becoming-wolf." The Israelites

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Israelite war band (Neville, *Representations of the Natural World*, 56). Such a view was shared by J.E. Cross: "*Hildewulf* (*Genesis* 2052) describes Abraham's army on their march to save Lot, their kinsman, in a passage in which Abraham encourages his men in the confidence of help from the Lord" ("Oswald and Byrhtnoth: A Christian Saint and a Hero Who Is Christian," *English Studies* 46 [1965]: 108). Charles Kennedy also believes the *hildewulfas* refers to Abraham's army, translating the bit in question as "And when these war-wolves had journeyed nigh unto the camp, the son of Terah, wise of heart, bespake his captains (great was his need that they should wage grim war on either flank, and hard hand-play against the foe) and said that easily the Holy, Everlasting Lord could speed their fortunes in the spear-strife" (*The Cædmon Poems* [Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965], 70).

[129] On the association of wolves and outlaws in the Anglo-Saxon period, see Sarah Harlan-Haughey, *The Ecology of the English Outlaw in Medieval Literature: From Fen to Greenwood* (London: Routledge, 2016), 23-68. See also Pluskowski, *Wolves and Wilderness*, 185-87.

[130] Andy Orchard, "Conspicuous Heroism: Abraham, Prudentius, and the Old English Verse *Genesis*," in *Heroes and Heroines in Medieval English Literature: A Festscrift Presented to André Crépin on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Leo Carruthers (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1994), reprinted in *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings*, ed. R.M. Liuzza (London: Routledge, 2002), 119-36; at 123-24.

are not donning wolf skins or entering into any sort of altered state like Beowulf or the berserkers, but one could label the way they stalk and attack the Elamites as "wolfish."[131] The fact that they strike at night ("*under nihtscuwan,*" "under the cover of night," in the Old English, following Genesis 14.15's "*nocte*," "by night") in order to ambush their enemy could be analogized to the behaviors of wolves, who are nocturnal predators, and the use of ambushing tactics here also may have been thought of as lupine.[132] Isidore notes in the *Etymologiae* that "*de quo rustici aiunt vocem hominem perdere, si eum lupus prior viderit. Unde et subito tacenti dicitur: 'Lupus in fabula.' Certe si se praevisum senserit, deponit feritatis audaciam*" ("country folk say that a person loses his voice if a wolf sees him first. Whence to someone who suddenly falls silent one says, 'The wolf in the story.' Certainly if a wolf perceives that he is seen first, he puts aside his bold ferocity").[133] Presumably, losing one's voice here came from situations where humans were surprised by wolves and unable to summon help against their sudden attack. Depending on the prey, wolves are believed to employ different hunting strategies, including ambushing, relay running, and the use of decoys.[134] If sighted,

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131 We might also label it "guerrilla warfare," a term that Samantha Zacher has applied to the tactics that Judith uses to behead Holofernes in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Judith*. See her *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 133-37.

132 I am reminded here of T.A. Shippey's argument in "Boar and Badger: an Old English Heroic Antithesis?" *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 220-39. Shippey believes two notions of heroic combat existed in Anglo-Saxon England: one that involved charging at the enemy (like a boar) and another battling in a choke point and holding one's ground (like a badger). These associations were not explicitly named by the Anglo-Saxons, though, and the animal labels are Shippey's inventions. That said, I certainly agree that the Anglo-Saxons did think of combat as akin to the behavior of animals, and I am pushing here for a third kind of fighting style, one imagined like a wolf, that involved the pursuit and ambushing of enemies and could be imagined as a sort of ambush-style hunting.

133 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII.ii.24.

134 The existence of these techniques, especially route running, is controversial among those who study wolves. See L. David Mech, Douglas W. Smith, and Daniel R. Macnulty, *Wolves on the Hunt: The Behavior of Wolves Hunting Wild Prey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 5-7.

wolves are less likely to attack, their next move determined by whether their prey chooses fight or flight, perhaps reflecting the last bit in Isidore about the wolf losing its "bold ferocity."[135] The detail about Abraham dividing his forces, which is found in the Old English and the Vulgate, also might have called to mind wolfish behavior. Wolves would have been seen feasting on prey already immobilized (or killed). In this situation, wolves surround the animal on all slides while eating.[136]

Other details in the passage as well as a line in *Exodus* lend further support that Abraham and his force are the "*hildewulfas*." For starters, the "*hildewulfas*" line serves the purpose of actually getting Abraham's army to the "*herewicum*" ("army camp") where the battle will occur. "*Neh*," a preposition, is best translated as "near" when it takes a dative of place. It is not outside the realm of possibility that Abraham could have figured out his plan of attack while in active pursuit of the Elamites, but it makes more sense if Abraham devised his two-pronged attack while able to observe his enemy and the layout of its camp, especially given his limited number of retainers. Further, this may not be the only time Old Testament Jewish warriors were thought of as noble wolves. J.E. Cross has argued that "such noun-compounds having *wulf* as the second element are used simply of warriors to express the idea that they are anxious to fight and kill," and he identifies not only Abraham's army as an example but also the "*heoruwulfas*" ("sword-wolves") of Exodus 181b, which he believes are the

[135] Ibid., 8.
[136] L. David Mech, *The Wolf: The Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 185.

escaping Israelites.[137] If this is the case, then the two positive mentions of wolfish armies we have in the Old English literary corpus both refer to the Israelites, and one can speculate the Anglo-Saxons thought of these pre-Christian lupine warriors as somehow analogous to their own preconversion heroes.[138]

Why the poet would use a single animal image to characterize two groups of people in *Genesis A* is a question worth addressing. Why risk a chance at confusion? Perhaps the poet might have been looking for a new form of contrast, to recapture wolfishness by showing the difference between the lupinity of criminals and outlaws and that demonstrated by skill and ingenuity in combat. It would be fitting that the proper wolves hunted and eliminated the false ones, becoming-wolf in a way that fit the heroic ethos, especially when compared to the subhuman Elamites. This could be why *Beowulf* refers to both its protagonist and his inhuman opponents with the word *aglæca.* The human *aglæca* removed the others who challenged human supremacy.

This argument fits well with the poem's likely provenance. The date for *Genesis A* argued by Fulk and accepted by Doane in his edition may tip the scales in favor of the *hildewulfas* being Abraham and his men. *Genesis A* is considered one of the older poems in the corpus. This was once due to an attribution of the poem to Cædmon, who Bede believed was the inventor of Old English religious verse. In Bede's story, Cædmon performs poetic biblical paraphrase, leading early scholars to believe

[137] Cross, "Oswald and Byrhtnoth," 108.
[138] In this, I follow the argument presented by Geoffrey Russom that the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed situating their own Germanic legends "within the heroic era of biblical history" ("History and Anachronism in *Beowulf*," in *Epic and History*, ed. David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub [Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 244).

this savant produced the contents of the Junius Manuscript.[139] We know this is not true, but based on linguistic and metrical evidence, *Genesis A* is now thought to date to the early eighth century if from a region other than Northumbria – if from Northumbria, then before 825.[140] Assuming this is the case, the poem would have been produced in an environment where wolfishness would more likely be considered a positive association for a warrior than later in the Anglo-Saxon period. Not only would it link a warrior to the North Sea Zone heroes of legend, but it could draw on the association of the wolf with Rome, namely the founding of the city by Romulus and Remus, who were raised by a she-wolf.[141] Late in the eighth century, the desire of rulers such as Æthelberht II of East Anglia and Offa of Mercia to associate themselves with *Romanitas* (both that of the distant past and that displayed by their contemporary, Charlemagne) led to the minting of coins with the image of Romulus and Remus on one side and the royal portrait on the other. Rory Naismith points out that for Æthelberht II, seeking greater independence from Offa, the coins would have the additional benefit of establishing his link to the East Anglian dynasty known as the Wuffingas, strengthening the legitimacy of his kingship.[142] In the eighth century, in other words, wolfishness was trendy for the aristocracy and could be politically useful.

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[139] The narrative about Cædmon is in *HE* IV.24.
[140] Fulk, *History of Old English Meter*, 392.
[141] For a historical overview of this legend, see Cristina Mazzoni, *She-Wolf: The Story of a Roman Icon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[142] Interestingly, it appears that Offa retained the design after Æthelberht's execution (on Offa's command) in 794. See Rory Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England: The Southern English Kingdoms 757-865* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 118-20 (Fig. 4.10a). See also Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 147.

The poet of *Genesis A* accomplished several goals at once in calling his heroes of the Northern Kings episode "*hildewulfas*." It helped his poem appeal to an audience familiar with lupine heroes from its pre-Christian legends, establishing continuity between the noble warriors of the Old Testament and those of the early English. To some in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon aristocracy, this continuity may have included the wolfish founders of Rome and Anglian ancestors. Further, it might have just made for a good story, describing the kind of ingenuity and ferocity an inspired band of 318 warriors displayed in defeating the assembled, bestial armies of five evil kings.

The exploits of Beowulf and Abraham were intended to protect their people and treasured places from the animal forces that threatened them. In doing so, they performed their identities as warriors, a role that required them to slaughter beasts or bestial humans. This reaffirmed human superiority over the animal world, but it also foregrounded a desire to be like an animal. Beowulf and Abraham, in fighting whales and wolves, became whalish and wolfish themselves. In a sense, these warriors outflanked the animals (and Abraham did so literally), both as rational beings and as physically superior beings, better beasts than the actual beasts. Unfortunately, this sort of longing for animals, to be an animal, resulted in the sacrifice of animal life, albeit on a small scale. What of the leaders who commanded these warriors, who projected power not in one-on-one conflicts or even single battles but across the space of an entire nation and beyond? It is this figure, the ruler or sovereign, and that figure's

desire for and destruction of animals in Anglo-Saxon England that is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOVEREIGN ANIMAL

Sometimes it appeared the "bad" wolves had won. In *The Passion of Saint Edmund*, the eponymous king of East Anglia is slain by a lupine band of Viking invaders led by Ivar the Boneless. In *The Battle of Maldon*, the Danish "*wælwulfas*" ("slaughter-wolves") eventually overwhelm Earl Byrhtnoth and his splintered army.[1] There is also the Exeter Book poem *The Fortunes of Men*, where the wolf, this time a real animal rather than a zoomorphic human, destroys human life:

> Sumum þæt gegongeð on geoguð-feore
> þæt se ende-stæf earfeð-mægum
> wealic weorþeð. Sceal hine wulf etan,
> har hæð-stapa; hin-siþ þonne
> modor bimurneð. Ne bið swylc monnes geweald![2] (10-14)

["It happens to some unfortunate men that the end comes woefully in one's youth. The wolf, the gray heath-stepper, shall eat him; the mother then mourns the death. Such a thing is not under the control of man."]

The passage contrasts the wolf and the "*earfeðmæcg*" (*DOE* "unfortunate or unhappy man") being "*eten*" (*DOE etan*, "to devour, eat voraciously"). The wolf is "*har*," a color word often applied metonymically to those gray-haired who possess experience

[1] Ln. 96a.

[2] *Old English Shorter Poems Volume II: Wisdom and Lyric*, 56. The translation is my own, and I have consulted Bjork's translation of the above and that of S.A.J. Bradley in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: J.M. Dent, 1982), 341.

through age – one can think of the image of the "*har hilderinc*" ("old warrior"), for instance.[3] The consumed, on the other hand, is "*on geogoðfeore*" (*DOE* "[period of] youth"). If the word "*geogoðfeorh*" looks familiar, it is the same term we saw Beowulf use to describe the age he and Breca were at the onset of their swimming contest, before they had matured as warriors.[4] *The Fortunes of Men* depicts such inexperienced humans as no match for a "natural" killer like the wolf. We have already seen a contrast along these lines established by Pliny, who saw animals as born possessing a familiarity with how their bodies work. This made them physically superior to average humans, who were born helpless and needed to learn how to survive in the world.[5] *The Fortunes of Men* argues that such predation by the wolf cannot be prevented – it is part of the world's design. The impactful final half-line rejects the possibility that human "*geweald*" (B-T "power") can stop such killings from happening. Wolves are just going to eat some humans, and mothers will have to be sad.

Nevertheless, some did attempt to control the predation of wild animals, especially those with great political "*geweald*." There is a proverb that paraphrases the Roman playwright Plautus and line 495 of his comedy *Asinaria*: "*Homo homini lupus est*," or "man is wolf to man."[6] If that is the case, then Edgar, the king of the English who would posthumously acquire the epithet "the peacemaker" from the commentary

[3] A search of the *DOE Web Corpus* shows that "*har hilderinc*" occurs in *Exodus* 241a, *Beowulf* 1307a and 3136a, *Battle of Maldon* 169a, *Battle of Brunanburh* 39a, and the *Rewards of Piety* 57a.
[4] Ln. 537a.
[5] See above, 97-99.
[6] The exact quote from Plautus reads, "*Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit*," or "A man's a wolf, not a man, to a man who don't know what he's like." The text and translation are from Plautus, *Asinaria: The One About the Asses*, trans. John Henderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 52-53.

on his reign by John of Worcester, was a "man who was wolf to wolf."[7] John's contemporary, William of Malmesbury, mentions that Edgar required his Welsh tributaries to provide him with 300 wolf pelts annually, a payment that helped to define his form of rulership:

> Sancitati quoque morum communicabat seueritatis animositas, ur nullum cuiuscumque dignitatis hominem leges eludere impune permittere. Nemo eius tempore priuatus latro, nemo popularis predo, nisi qui mallet in fortunas alienas grassari propriae uitae dispendio. Quomodo enim ausus hominum preteriret qui etiam omnis generis feras sanguinis auidas ex regno exterminare cogitarit, Iudualoque regi Walensium edictum imposuerit ut sibi quotannis tributum trecentorum luporum pensitaret? Quod cum tribus annis fecisset, quarto destitit, nullum se ulterius posse inuenie professus. [8]

["High-spirited severity associated in Edgar with saintliness of character to prevent any man, whatever his position in society, from evading the laws with impunity. In his time no private person was a thief, none of the common people were robbers, except those who deliberately chose to make secret attacks on other men's possession at the cost of their own lives. How could a king overlook the criminal acts of men, if he had it in mind to exterminate from his kingdom even those beasts of every kind that shed

[7] Sean Miller, "Edgar," in *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 163.
[8] The text and translation are from *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998-1999), 254-55.

blood, and laid on Idwal king of the Welsh an obligation to pay him an annual tribute of three hundred wolves? – which he paid for three years, and in the fourth year defaulted, saying he could find no more."]

The king accomplished much with this demand. If, as Peter Baker argues, tribute "conveys both value and honour," then Edgar's demand, which required the Welsh to risk their own lives to hunt the dangerous beasts, granted him value and honor in reaffirming authority over his human, foreign foes.[9] It provided a service for his English subjects as well, cleansing the land of an animal (presumably the wolves did not respect the boundaries of Welsh and Anglo-Saxon territory) that could threaten their livestock and, if *The Fortunes of Men* is to be believed, endanger their own lives. It also made him more like Christ and became a sign of the king's holiness (*sanctitas*). At the beginning of this study, we saw Gildas bitterly complaining that the shepherds, i.e. the British kings, had abandoned their flocks, allowing human "wolves," Edgar's own Anglo-Saxon ancestors, to enter the fold and attack the common people.[10] Christ was the paradigmatic shepherd, able to protect his sheep from the always threatening, lupine Satan, and kings, as earthly representatives of Christ, were supposed to safeguard their subjects' souls and bodies. In demanding the extermination of wolves, Edgar was performing his role as the kingly shepherd, associating his protection from the beasts with the salvational power of Christ.

[9] Baker, *Honour, Exchange and Violence*, 64.
[10] See above, 1-5.

Finally, Edgar's demand of the pelts, representative of his dominion over the natural world as a whole, spread fear of the law and recognition of his ability and desire to guide the activities of his human subjects, creatures with more potential for unruliness than any animal. Those willing to violate the law needed to understand the king's "*animositas*" ("boldness, spirit") and would be aided in doing so by seeing the presence of the wolf replaced with the presence of kingly power. If Edgar had the time and influence to concern himself with what beasts did, including preventing the predation that some, like the *Fortunes of Men* poet, saw as inevitable, one could imagine how the king would react to humans, the superior being worthier of attention, who defied the sovereign and predated on other humans. Punishment would be swift and severe both for the real wolves and for outlaws, the human wolves.

Edgar's son and eventual successor, Æthelræd, also demanded the slaughter of wolves, but of a metaphoric sort: the Danish. The mass killing of Danes in 1002, now known as the St. Brice's Day Massacre, is thought to be the result of the English king's declining hold on power, an attempt to regain the authority that had increasingly slipped away due to repeated defeats at the hands of Viking invaders, including the one at Maldon.[11] That last setback had led the king, at the advice of Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury, to pay the Danes a large sum of money to buy peace.[12] Shortly thereafter, Æthelræd would release a charter that imagined the Danish

[11] Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, 107.
[12] In the entry for 991, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (C) tells how "*þæt wæs ærest* .x. *ðusenda punda; þæne ræd gerædde ærest Syric arcebisceop"* ("that was first ten thousand pounds; that counsel was first suggested by Archbishop Sigeric").

as nonhuman others that needed to be eliminated.[13] He thought of them as plants, as "cockles" or "weeds," one of the lowest forms of existence in Aristotle's taxonomy (above only the rocks), the Scandinavians becoming an infestation that needed to be ripped from the very soil of England.[14] It is likely that the Anglo-Saxons thought of them as wolfish at the same time, feral beasts that had managed to infiltrate the pen, some in the clothing of sheep, just as Gildas had thought of the Anglo-Saxons.[15] That such a move was current in England at the time is suggested by a line in *Maldon* I mentioned earlier that identifies the Danish invaders as "*wælwulfas*" ("slaughter-wolves"), a noun that comes after the poem has established their greed and treachery.[16] James Earl has called the slaughter on St. Brice's Day "an Anglo-Saxon *Kristalnacht*," relating it to the killing of Jews in Nazi Germany in November 1938. The Nazi use of animal imagery, particularly that of rodents, to characterize Jews has been widely discussed, and it may not be a stretch to suggest that bestial imagery associated with the Danish became one more way of attempting to justify their slaughter during

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[13] The text of the charter can be found in *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St. Frideswide at Oxford*, 2 vols., ed. Spencer Robert Wigram, Oxford Historical Society 28, 31 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895-96), 1:2-3. For the transmission history of the charter and a translation, see *English Historical Documents: c. 500-1042,* ed. Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 590-92.

[14] For a discussion of Aristotle's taxonomy, see above, 45. The source for the imagery in Æthelræd's charter was Christ's Parable of the Tares, found in Matthew 13.24-40. See Jonathan Wilcox, "The St. Brice's Day Massacre and Archbishop Wulfstan," in *Peace and Negotiation*: *Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Diane Wolfthal (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 84.

[15] On Gildas' animal imagery, see above, 4-5.

[16] There is no need here to rehash the extensive debate behind the meaning of the verb "*lytegian*" in 86a except to say that I agree with those who see the word as negatively portraying the Danish invaders. Such a reading would align with the profileration of anti-Danish texts in England at the time and the frequent association of that people with wolfish savagery and cowardice. Cf. Leonard Neidorf, who, following J.E. Cross, argues that "the description of the Vikings as *wælwulfas* (wolves of slaughter) is less likely a negative or demonic characterization and more likely a heroic epithet emphasizing their ferocity in battle. See Cross, "Oswald and Byrhtnoth," 108, and Neidorf, "II Æthelred and the Politics of the *Battle of Maldon*," *JEGP* 111.4 (2012): 460.

Æthelræd's reign.[17]

There was one king, however, who could even control wolves after his death: the aforementioned Edmund of East Anglia. The *Passion of Saint Edmund* was originally composed by Abbo of Fleury and shortly thereafter adapted by the prolific Ælfric. Ælfric himself provides the genealogy of the story: Abbo heard it from a friend, Archbishop Dunstan, who as a youth had heard it from a swordbearer of Edmund's, an eyewitness to the events in the passion.[18] The *passio* attempts to make sense of how the ruler of East Anglia could be slain by marauding Danes in 869. What makes Edmund's life different from many passions is that his bestial persecutors are not immediately punished following Edmund's martyrdom, and this could be troubling for a narrative whose goal was in part to display the triumph of Christian faith over heathen violence. A substitute would be required to allow the ruler in heaven and the ruler on Earth to prove their sovereignty.

Like most saints lives, Ælfric's version of Edmund's *passio* is highly conventional, both in its faithfulness to Abbo and usage of hagiographical tropes. One such trope imagines the enemies of the saint as animals and gives the saint control over the animal world on account of his or her holiness. While Edmund is

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[17] James W. Earl, "Violence and Non-Violence in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric's *Passion of St. Edmund*," *Philological Quarterly* 78 (1999): 125. For a discussion of the Nazis' use of animal images to dehumanize Jews, see Charles Patterson, *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* (New York: Lantern Books, 2002), especially 44-48, and Boria Sax, *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 2000). Comparisons between the Holocaust and the slaughter of animals in our contemporary culture has been a subject of great controversy, and for a discussion on that debate, see Tony Milligan, *Animal Rights: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2015), 103-112.

[18] The text of the *passio* used here is from Ælfric, *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. G.I. Needham (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1976), and references are to page number; at 43.

described as "*snotor and wurþfull*" ("wise and venerable") and always worshipping God, the Danes and their leaders, Hinguar (the name "Ivar" in Old English) and Hubba, are noted as "*gewunnenum sige mid wælhreownysse*" ("winning victory with savagery").[19] Like the Elamites of *Genesis A*, they kill indiscriminately, slaughtering women and children:

> Hinguar þa becom to Eastenglum rowende, on þam geare þe Ælfred æðelincg an and twentig geare wæs, se þe Westsexena cynincg siþþan wearð mære; and se foresæda Hinguar færlice swa swa wulf on lande bestalcode and þa leode [of]sloh, weras and wif and þa ungewittigan cild, and to bysmore tucode þa bilewitan Cristenan.

["Ivar then came sailing to East Anglia in the year that Prince Alfred was twenty-one, he who afterwards became the glorious king of the West Saxons; and the aforesaid Ivar suddenly stalked about on the land just like a wolf and slew the people, men and women and the innocent children, and wretchedly humiliated the peaceable Christians."]

The *passio* paints the Vikings as a dangerous yet conquerable bestial force. Hinguar's animalistic attributes are many: his thirst for violence, his sudden attack on unsuspecting humans (shown by the use of the verb "*bestalcian*," which occurs only here in the corpus), and his lack of distinction in killing, which combine to make

[19] *Lives of Three English Saints*, 44.

Hinguar a formidable adversary "*swa swa wulf*."[20]

There is little evidence from other sources that Ivar suffered the kind of unusual demise that often befall the villains of hagiography. The chronicler Æthelweard simply reports that Ivar died later in the year after his encounter with Edmund.[21] The audience, though, would expect some sort of victory by the saint over his oppressors. What the text does instead is to show God and the king's power by domesticating an actual rather than figurative wild animal, comparable to the way a ruler would deal with the beasts that threatened his kingdom. After decapitating the saint, the Vikings attempt to deny the East Anglians a proper and honorable burial by hiding Edmund's head in thick brambles in the forest.[22] The king's subjects go searching for the head, and Ælfric writes that

> Hi eodon þa ealle endemes to þam wuda, secende gehwær, geond þyfelas and bremelas, gif hi ahwær mihton gemeton þæt heafod. Wæs eac micel wundor þæt an wulf wearð asend þurh Godes wissunge to bewerigenne þæt heafod wið þa oþre deor ofer dæg and niht.[23]

["They then went all together to the wood, searching everywhere, throughout bushes and brambles, if they might find the head anywhere. It was likewise a great wonder that a wolf was sent through God's guidance to protect the head against the other beasts throughout the day and night."]

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[20] *DOE* s.v. *bestalcian*.
[21] Needham, *Lives of Three English Saints*, 45n28.
[22] *Lives of Three English Saints*, 50.
[23] Ibid., 51.

The punishment for Hinguar and his band is replaced by the transformation of the wolf. Its conversion here is intended to show that God's power is available to those who have faith in him and that any vicious animal, human or otherwise, can be overcome no matter the circumstances.

The next passage expands on this process, the wolf becoming something akin to a domestic animal. Edmund's head calls out to the people searching for it, but when they locate the head, they come across a curious sight, as

> Þa læg se græge wulf þe bewiste þæt heafod, and mid his twam fotum hæfde þæt heafod becylpped, grædig ond hungrig, and for Gode ne dorste þæs heafdes abyrian, ac heold hit wiþ deor. Þa wurdon hi ofwundrode þæs wulfes hyrdrædenne, and þæt halige heafod ham feredon mid him, þancigende þam Ælmihtigan ealra his wundra; ac se wulf folgode forþ mid þam heafde, oþ þæt hi to tune comon, swylce he tam wære, and gewende eft siþþan to wuda ongean.[24]

("There lay the gray wolf, greedy and hungry, who guarded the head, and with his two feet clasped the head, but on account of God did not taste the head but protected it against beasts. Then they were amazed at the protection of the wolf and carried the holy head home with them, thanking the Almighty for all his miracles. But the wolf, as if he were tame, accompanied them with the head until they came to the town, and after turned back to the woods again.")

[24] Ibid.

The wolf is mentioned as being "*grædig ond hungrig*" ("greedy and hungry"), powerful natural urges that must be resisted for it to protect Edmund. The wolf's destructive capability is repurposed here for a human good, becoming an animal guided by a rational hand (or head). A word in the passage that best encapsulates this process is found when the wolf follows the people home, ensuring the humans return safely to their town: the adjective "*tam*" ("tame"). Animals, as they are today, were placed into two categories, those who were capable of being domesticated and those who could only be wild, but this miracle momentarily collapses that boundary. The wolf becomes almost like a dog, an animal that some today argue evolved from the wolf.[25] The wolf in the *passio* represents the idea that the animalistic Vikings could also be tamed or converted back into humans and made into servants of God and the earthly sovereign. Perhaps Abbo and Ælfric knew how the Danes who settled in East Anglia would eventually come to venerate the martyred king and use his image on their coinage.[26]

Such acts of objective and symbolic violence against real and imagined beasts served a physical need, protecting the king's subjects from being harmed by an unpredictable animal force ready to invade human space.[27] In exchange for this

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[25] See below, 200-201.

[26] Susan J. Ridyard notes that the Danes' "adoption of St Edmund may have been a move shrewedly calculated to enhance their political position within Edmund's kingdom…by showing themselves to be patrons of his cult they might suggest their own legitimate succession to kingdom and might accordingly buttress their somewhat anomalous political position." Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon & East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 216-17.

[27] Steel provides a concise breakdown of these forms of violence as they are defined by Slavoj Zizek. "Objective violence," Steel writes, "is the systemic and generally unacknowledged violence by which the status quo sustains itself,

protection, which they could not provide for themselves, some measure of freedom was surrendered to the king. Controlling animal life, as William of Malmesbury understood, helped rulers like Edmund, Edgar, and Æthelræd to define their sovereignty and broaden their authority over man. However, the sovereign, as Jacques Derrida has observed in a recently published series of lectures, was often imagined as akin to a beast himself, and this is true of Anglo-Saxon thought. Here I examine this seeming contradiction, of the ruler as both beastmaster and beast. The hawk and horse became the two animals the Anglo-Saxons used to understand the changing nature of a sovereignty born from a pairing of traditional Germanic tribal models and theocratic Christian ideals. I also look at those rulers who were thought to devolve into the wolfish on account of abusing their sovereignty.

Beast(ly)masters: Anglo-Saxon Sovereigns and Animals

We know little about kingship in Anglo-Saxon England from 450 to 600, the period between the initial migrations and the Gregorian mission led by Augustine, the future and first archbishop of Canterbury, in 597. Barbara Yorke laments, "Not only are the birth pangs of kingship among the Anglo-Saxons lost to us, but it is also difficult to say exactly what the position of king meant to an early Anglo-Saxon."[28] We can gleam some understanding, though, from Tacitus, who wrote about Germanic tribes at the end of the first century, and from material culture. Tacitus tells us that "*Reges ex*

committed as a constitutive element of the 'objective' status quo itself." On the other hand, "symbolic violence is the violence of language, which distinguishes one subject from another" (*How to Make a Human*, 17).

[28] Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Routledge, 1990), 15.

nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt" ("The kings they choose for their noble birth, their army commanders for their valour").[29] Rulers, in other words, were selected for the blood they carried and the blood they shed. These are also the two noteworthy qualifications of Bede's preconversion *duces* in the *Historia*, Hengest and Horsa, emphasis placed there on the brothers' genealogy and prowess in combat.[30] The little evidence we have outside Bede for early Anglo-Saxon nobility comes from burial sites. It suggests a close association between the elites and animals, particularly horses, cremated or buried whole next to their presumed masters. Animals also appear on objects placed inside the grave. These include swords, shields, and helmets that archaeologists believe were intended to represent skill in combat and ancestry through their status as heirlooms.[31]

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons brought the use of written records in the forms of histories, hagiographies, and laws, combining with the old traditions to syncretically form a new image of kingship, one made theocratic by the new religion and the access it provided to biblical models and guidance from Rome and Francia. As Joseph Canning notes, "In the barbarian kingdoms God was understood to be the ultimate source of royal authority. This notion, which was widely prevalent in the sixth century, became focused into the formula that such a ruler was 'king by the

[29] *Germania* VII. Translations of *Germania* are from Tacitus, *Agricola* and *Germany*, trans. Anthony R. Birley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[30] *HE* I.15.
[31] For the role of burial in early Anglo-Saxon identity construction, see above, 105-7.

grace of God' (*rex dei gratia*) – that he ruled by God's favour."[32] The king's power derived from God, and it could be taken away by God. The maintenance of the king's authority was thought to depend on the fulfillment of his responsibility to act as an ideal Christian and to care for his subjects' physical and spiritual well-being – as we've seen, to shepherd them. "Kingship was viewed as an office existing within a Christian normative structure: there was no place for the arbitrary exercise of the monarch's will," Canning writes. "The king's role was that of Christian service for the common good of his people."[33]

In a series of lectures published as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida shows how sovereignty positions itself as superior to the animal, as needing to protect its subjects against the danger of that lurking, always threatening Other. To provide this safety, sovereignty has a need, a "certain power to *give*, to *make*, but also to *suspend* the law…the exceptional right to place oneself above right, the right to non-right."[34] While this absolutism makes the sovereign appear like God, the original lawgiver in Judeo-Christian traditions, it also "runs the risk of making the sovereign look like the most brutal beast who respects nothing, scorns the law, immediately situates himself above the law, at a distance from the law."[35] But there is nothing natural about sovereignty – it is artificial, a manmade construct, a prosthetic, produced by "fables" that attempt to make known the nature of its absolutism. It thus possesses a "beastly"

[32] Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought 300-1450* (London: Routledge, 1996), 17.
[33] Ibid., 19.
[34] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. 1, 16.
[35] Ibid., 17.

stupidity (*bête*), an inability to self-reflect and respond, lacks humans have traditionally assigned to animals.[36] The sovereign rules through fear of this law, fear of the sovereign whom it represents, and fear of the animal Other who remains outside (like the wolves Edgar demanded slaughtered or the lupine Vikings). Sovereignty too possesses this lurking presence but paints itself as remaining within the boundaries it marks as "human."

Derrida's conception of sovereignty provides a useful starting point for understanding the reasons animality was frequently associated with kingship in Anglo-Saxon England, but like any recent development in the understanding of identity and power, it must be applied to medieval societies with some caution. The technologies used to spread sovereign fables among the Anglo-Saxons would differ from those that came later – such technologies are always particular to time and place. Further, sovereignty was more closely tied to the king's performance as a Christian exemplar than in the later periods upon which Derrida's work primarily focuses. As Gregory the Great wrote to the Kentish ruler Æthelberht, as quoted by Bede, "*Propter hoc omnipotens Deus bonos quosque ad populorum regimina perducit, ut per eos omnibus quibus praelati fuerint, dona suae pietatis impendat*" ("Almighty God raises up certain good men to be rulers over nations in order that he may by their means bestow the gifts of his righteousness upon all those over whom they are set").[37]

[36] For Derrida's critique of Heidegger and Lacan on such claims, see his *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, especially 119-60.
[37] *HE* I.32.

The animals most often likened to the sovereign in the Anglo-Saxon imagination were the wolf, the hawk, and the horse. If the good Christian king was a shepherd, then the bad king was a wolf, a lupine ruler who predated on rather than protected the flock. This was a belief that dated back to the classical philosophers. Plato had established the binary of protector and wolf in *The Republic*, and from there, it made its way to patristic writers.[38] The association of wolfishness and tyranny appears several times in Anglo-Saxon works, showing up in the poems *Deor and Daniel*, in Bede,[39] and in one of Ælfric's sermons. Among Anglo-Saxon writers, Ælfric is perhaps the clearest on why rulers are though of as lupine:

> Wulf bið eac se unrihtwisa rica þe bereafað þa cristenan and þa eaðmodan mid his riccetere ofsit: Ac se hyra oððe se medgilde ne gedyrstlæhð þæt he his unrihtwisnysse wiþstande þæt he ne forleose his wurðmynt and þa woruldlican gestreon þe he lufað swiðor þonne þa cristenan menn.[40]

["The wicked powerful one is also a wolf who plunders the Christians and with his power oppresses the humble: But the hireling or the mercenary does not dare oppose that wickedness so that he does not lose the honour and the worldly treasures that he

[38] Book VIII. For a discussion on wolves in the *Republic*, see Christopher P. Long, "Who Let the Dogs Out? Tracking the Philosophical Life among the Wolves and Dogs of the *Republic,"* in *Plato's Animals: Gadflies, Horses, Swans, and Other Philosophical Beasts*, ed. Jeremy Bell and Michael Nass (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 131-148.
[39] Bede uses Genesis 49:27 in *HE* I.34 to characterize the savagery that the unconverted Northumbrian king Æthelfrith shows in conquering and enslaving the Britons. The verse describes Benjamin as a "*lupus rapax*," a "rapacious wolf."
[40] CH 1.17 55-59. The text and line numbering of the *Catholic Homilies* is from *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. Peter Clemoes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); at 315. Clemoes identifies Gregory, Hom. 14 [PL 76] as a source for these lines (Ibid., 139).

loves more than the Christian men."]

Ælfric emphasizes the wolfish character of greed, using the verb "*bereafian*" (*DOE* "to deprive, rob, plunder") to characterize the actions of the tyrant. The bad king is seen as a type of anti- or pretend Christian, the opposite of those who are "*eadmod*" ("humble"). Those who follow the king are not forgiven either, treated as cowardly for caring more about worldly concerns that proper Christian behavior. "I'm just following orders" is no excuse.

The poetic mentions are not so explicit, though reading them through Ælfric's commentary sheds some light. *Deor* is one of the few surviving pieces of Old English heroic verse, and it is considered valuable as an indicator of traditional stories that would have been familiar to the Anglo-Saxons. As Bernard J. Muir notes in his edition of the poem, *Deor* presents "Germanic history and lore in an elliptical manner which assumes a wide knowledge of traditional material on the part of the audience."[41] One such example of "traditional material" were those legends surrounding the Gothic king Eormanric and his immoderate anger:

> We ge-ascodan Eormanrices
> wylfenne geþoht; ahte wide folc
> Gotena rices; þæt wæs grimm cyning.
> Sæt secg monig sorgum gebunden,

[41] Bernard J. Muir, *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 5301*, Volume 2: Commentary (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 598.

wean on wenan, wyscte geneahhe

þæt þæs cyne-rices ofercumen wære.

Þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg.[42] (21-27)

["We have learned of Eormanric's wolfish thought; he ruled widely the folk of the kingdom of the Goths; that was a cruel king. Sat many a man bound by sorrows, in expectation of misery, wished constantly that the kingdom would be overcome. That passed, so may this."]

Few specific complaints are lodged here against Eormanric, and that itself is interesting. Since the stanzaic form of the poem requires economy and does not provide much room for detail, it is likely the mention of someone's "*wylfenne geþoht*" ("wolfish thought") would have been readily intelligible to the poem's audience and relatable to the traditions surrounding the tyrant's behavior. Eormanric's wolfishness is the result of his acting outside the law, leading the speaker to summarize, "*Þæt wæs grim cyning*" ("that was a cruel king"), a contrast to the benevolent rulers (at least to their subjects) like *Beowulf*'s Scyld Scefing or Constantine in *Elene*, who get the "*Þæt wæs good cyning*" ("that was a good king") and "*He wæs riht cyning"* ("He was a just king") treatment, respectively.[43] Eormanric's reign does not only result in physical pain but mental suffering as well, leading his enemies to be helplessly "*sorgum gebunden*" ("bound by sorrows"). Eormanric, like a wolf, produces fear of a lurking presence,

[42] The text of *Deor* is from *Eight Old English Poems*, ed. John C. Pope, 3rd ed. rev. by R.D. Fulk (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 38.

[43] *Beowulf* 11b and *Elene* 13b. We will soon see why Constantine is a "*riht cyning*" - see below, 174.

which Derrida argued characterizes both the animality that sovereignty is defined against and the bestial force it possesses.[44] Deor's consolation, to himself, to Eormanric's subjects, and to his audience, is that this abusive earthly power is temporal, that it will "*ofereode*" ("pass").

Daniel too features a blurring of the line between tyrant and animal. The poem tells us of the conflicts that Daniel and the three youths have with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and as in the biblical account, the ruler's actions drive much of the narrative. Unlike Eormanric, Nebuchadnezzar's animality manifests not only through his actions but also through his body. The first time we see the Babylonian as a wolf is during his dream about his transformation and the end of his rule. Like an animal and a sovereign, he is outside the law: "*No he æ fremede*" ("He did not perform the law").[45] The poem calls him "*wulfheort*" ("wolfhearted") in 116b, ironically in apposition to "*Babilone weard*" ("guardian of the Babylonians") as we know he cares little about himself and little about his subjects. Nebuchadnezzar's fate is to lose his rationality, the marker of his humanity, and live for a time as a beast knowing only the "*wildeora þeaw*" ("existence of wild animals"), as Daniel prophesizes.[46] He has all the attributes of a wild animal, but he loses the power to make himself a bestial predator, becoming more like the prey that a wolf would seize than the wolf itself. Prostrate on the ground, it is only when he turns his eyes to the heavens, as a believing human

[44] Derrida makes this point throughout the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, but see especially 39-42.
[45] Ln. 106b.
[46] Ln. 571b.

would, that he is restored to his human self, the wiser for the experience.[47]

The wolf became a useful animal for the Anglo-Saxons to compare to tyrannical kings, but the two animals that were aligned with proper expressions of sovereignty were the hawk and the horse. These associations undoubtedly existed before the conversion, but one can find another animal like the stag[48] linked to kingship at that point also. However, with the introduction of Christian theocracy and with Anglo-Saxon kings consolidating more territory as the period progressed, the hawk and horse tend to be the animals most frequently compared to the nobility. Both were encountered by elites on a regular basis, and metaphors one can experience in the flesh everyday are the most powerful. Neither animal was aggressive toward friendly humans if properly trained, and both were important in hunting. Further, they had a long history in Anglo-Saxon popular beliefs, and Chris Fern notes the presence of these two animals in shamanistic practice, suitable transporters to the underworld because of their speed.[49] They were two animals capable of covering great distances in short amounts of time, and this could be analogized to the power of the sovereign to be present, to be mobile, to limit the difficulties imposed by time and space through control of people and territory. To Anglo-Saxon rulers seeking to expand their kingdoms and acquire more space over which it was necessary to project their power, seeing themselves as these animals makes a great deal of sense.

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[47] For a discussion on the idea that humans were designed by God so that they would naturally look to the heavens and animals, in contrast, designed to keep their heads to the ground, see below, 224-26.
[48] Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions*, 114.
[49] Fern, "Horses in Mind," 148.

Socioeconomic realities also played a role here. While ownership of horses was widespread, and Anglo-Saxon elites were in many cases responsible for supplying their laborers with mounts, the ability to obtain and properly equip equines suitable for hunting and racing was the privilege of the few.[50] Similarly, while interaction with predatory birds was not limited to elites, actual ownership of raptorial birds was rare given the expenses necessary to capture and train them. Falconry had been a pursuit in Anglo-Saxon England since at least the seventh century, but it grew more popular as time passed. A recent study of wildfowl bone deposits has shown that the consumption of birds caught by hunting increased dramatically at elite sites from the early to late Anglo-Saxon period, more than doubling.[51] "An upsurge in hunting and hawking, activities predominantly of the male elite at this time," Naomi Sykes writes, "can also be seen as reflecting the concern of the newly-fangled thegnly class to set themselves apart from their social inferiors."[52] We also know that priests and bishops were in on the falconry craze too thanks to condemnations by Ælfric and Wulfstan.[53] Edgar himself might have given a speech admonishing church leaders for abusing funds given to them, including spending money on the purchase of hunting dogs or raptors.[54] Monks could have brought experience with predatory birds from an aristocratic upbringing, or they might have encountered the animals through churches'

[50] C.J. Bond, "Hunting," in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 249.
[51] Naomi Sykes, "The Dynamics of Status Symbols: Wildfowl Exploitation in England AD 410-1550," *Archaeological Journal* 161.1 (2004): 86-87.
[52] Ibid., 87.
[53] Owen-Crocker, "Hawks and Horse-Trappings," 222.
[54] Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 43.

commitments to house and provide for the king's hawkers.[55] But as Oggins notes, these injunctions likely had little effect and certainly did not abolish hawking among the holy, as the monk Eadmer, writing after the Norman Conquest, noted that colleagues at Christ Church in Canterbury were still practicing it.[56]

We can see something of the methods used to train birds, and the potential metaphoric value in them for imaginative writers, in another passage from *The Fortunes of Men*. It is not the physicality of the bird that is celebrated there so much as the dominance of man over even the most recalcitrant of creatures:

> Sum sceal wildne fugel wloncne atemian,
> heafoc on honda, oþþæt seo heoro-swealwe
> wynsum weorþeð; deþ he wyrplas on,
> fedeþ swa on feterum fiþrum dealne,
> lepeþ lyft-swiftne lytlum gieflum,
> oþþæt se wælisca wædum ond dædum
> his æt-giefan ead-mod weorþeð
> ond to hago-stealdes honda gelæred. (85-92)

["One shall tame the wild, proud bird, the hawk on hand, so that the hawk becomes pleasant; he places jesses on it, feeds the one resplendent with feathers in its fetters, feeds the air-swift one little morsels, until the captured one becomes agreeable to his

[55] Ibid., 39.
[56] Ibid., 43.

provider in accouterments and deeds and led to the hand of the young warrior."] While sovereignty sometimes sought to destroy the nonhuman other, it could also be thought to desire, especially in its more theocratic expressions, the domestication of the animal (a common metaphor for human conversion to Christianity), to assimilate it into the law, and to cause fear of the law, which is the process we encountered in Edmund's passion with the change in the wolf. In the passage above, the power and authority of the rational human is depicted as all the greater thanks to the bird's innate stubbornness that must be overcome. The bird is "*wilde*" ("wild") and "*wlonce*," the latter a familiar word for "pride" and often applied to obstinate humans. Through the training by the youth, the bird, a "*heoroswealwe*" ("*heoru*" meaning "fierce" or "savage"), becomes "*wynsum*" ("pleasant") and "*eaðmod*" ("agreeable"), moving from the category of the wild to that of the domestic, and the human in doing so is made to look a more capable member of his society and vital to its workings.

One can think of this *hagosteald* ("young warrior") as being produced by the same culture as the young kinsman of Offa who brought his hawk to combat at the beginning of *Maldon*. Both would think of their hawk as "*leof*" ("beloved") not only because of the beauty of its body but for the time spent training the animal and the skill demonstrated and acquired in doing so.[57] The animal is not just valuable in and of itself but also for what it says about the nobility of the human possessor. The release

[57] *Battle of Maldon*, ln. 7b.

of the bird before the battle in *Maldon*—which Scragg calls "a gesture of loyalty[58]—shows that the *Offan mæg* realizes "*þæt se eorl nolde yrhðo geþolian*" ("that the earl would not endure weakness") and that he is willing to replace the simulated combat he enjoyed while hunting with the real deal, "becoming-hawk" against the Danes.[59] Thomas J.T. Williams writes that "the donning of boar-crested helmets or the girding on of war-gear decorated with serpents or raptors" can be imagined as part of a "transformative process that involved the adoption of a 'bestial' identity intended in part to facilitate the killing of others."[60] I believe bringing the animal to combat served the same purpose, and the release was thought to inspire others to "become-hawk" against their enemies too.

This "becoming-raptor" by the nobility can also be seen in the material culture from late in the Anglo-Saxon period. The *Vita Ædwardi regis* recounts a fabulous ship gifted by the powerful Earl Godwine to the king, Edward the Confessor, at the beginning of his reign in 1042. The vessel was adorned with several animal images, the text noting, "*Aureus e puppi leo prominent, aequora prorae/ celse pennato perterret corpore draco/ aureus et linguis flamman uomit ore trisulcis*" ("A golden lion stands up at the stern, while in the prow a golden dragon, its body winged, frightens the seas, spewing out flames

[58] *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), ed. D.G. Scragg, 69. In contrast to Scragg, Heather Stuart sees *Maldon* as containing an "ironic structure" that treats its English character as "antiheroic," arguing that the release of the hawk shows a living creature that is allowed to escape the battlefield and flee to the woods, a choice that Byrhtnoth's retainers do not have in the sense that society pressure forces them to stay lest they be labeled cowards. See Heather Stuart, "The Meaning of *Maldon*," *Neophilologus* 66 (1982): 132.
[59] All selections of the *Battle of Maldon* are from Scragg's edition. For a discussion of "becoming," see above, 101-105.
[60] Williams, "'For the Sake of Bravado in the Wilderness,'" 177.

from threefold mouth").[61] The most striking animal, however, would have been found on the mast:

> Antemne grauidus stipes roburque uolatus
> sustinet, extensis auro rutilantibus alis,
> armigerum uolucrem pedibus rostroque ferentem,
> et similem uiuo, uisu gemmis simulato. (21-24)

["The mast, that yard-bearing trunk, speeding the ship with its burden of sails, supports a bird with outstretched wings, shimmering with gold, made lifelike with gems for eyes, clasping a warrior with its beak and claws."]

There is some uncertainty over the meaning of the these lines, but if the most commonly accepted reading, that the bird is clutching the warrior, is correct, then its placement on the top of the boat called to mind old traditions.[62] The ship-as-bird metaphor is common in the Old English poetic corpus, and as the Anglo-Saxons developed naval forces to defend against Viking attacks by sea, it is possible they thought of their real warships as akin to predatory birds (as we do today with our jet fighters).[63] The bird adorning the king's ship would not only represent the association of raptors with nobility but also the king's ability to dominate uncontrollable space, here the ocean, and the animal forces in it that threatened his kingdom, the same

[61] The text and translation are by Henry Summerson, J.W. Binns, and Rosalind Love in Henry Summerson, "Tudor Antiquaries and the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*," *ASE* 38 (2009): 170-72.
[62] Simon Keynes and Rosalind Love, "Earl Godwine's Ship," *ASE* 38 (2009): 209-10
[63] As of the summer of 2016, there are United States Air Force jet fighters in service with the names Eagle (F-15), Strike Eagle (F-15E), Fighting Falcon (F-16), and Raptor (F-22A).

move we saw made in Beowulf's swimming episode.[64]

There was no animal, though, that came to be as closely associated with the sovereign as the horse. A vital animal to an Anglo-Saxon no matter his or her place in society, the horse's role in constructing the sovereignty of Anglo-Saxon kings is the next subject of this chapter.

Anglo-Saxon Horsepower

From the very beginning, the horse and the Anglo-Saxon sovereign were linked. Bede identifies the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon migration as Hengest and Horsa, legendary war chiefs with equine names who may have been central figures in a horse-venerating cult brought by the Germanic tribes to the island. The brothers' resemblance to other legends of founding twins has long been recognized, a lineage traceable back to Indo-European myth, stories that often feature twins associated with a particular animal, such as Romulus and Remus with the wolf or the Dioscuri with the swan.[65] Fern has identified Hengest and Horsa with an artistic motif of longhaired, mounted warriors that appears in the material culture of fifth-century Scandinavia, which he argues could be interpreted as references to Vidar and Vale, the sons of Odin, and that we can also locate in early Anglo-Saxon material culture.[66]

Evidence in Anglo-Saxon England for a horse cult comes from a number of additional sources. We have already seen the importance of horses in burial, with

[64] See above, 114-27.
[65] J.E. Turville-Petre, "Hengest and Horsa," *Saga Book* 14 (1957): 273-77.
[66] Fern, "Horses in Mind," 143-44.

hundreds of graves containing the ashes of cremated horses or, in cases like the famous Mound 17 of Sutton Hoo, horses interred whole alongside their presumed owners.[67] We know from bone deposits that the early Anglo-Saxons ate horseflesh, and we know further from a letter by St. Boniface (albeit about the tribes he was attempting to convert in Bavaria) and statues enacted in 786 that the church frowned on such dietary practices.[68] Whether the consumption of horse flesh had any additional importance other than as a food source is impossible to conclusively determine, but the presence of horse teeth in burial deposits before the onset of the eighth century suggests their bodies may have been believed to impart some sort of protective power onto man.[69]

Fern's study of the horse in early Anglo-Saxon England presents a narrative where "horse beliefs were certainly at odds with Late Antique Christian thinking, and this is very probably why animal funerary sacrifice, as well as the eating of horse meat, ended in Germanic regions across Europe after Roman conversion."[70] Fern is correct that the church would seek to abolish such animistic practices, but what his argument does not take into account is that Christian thinkers could repurpose horse veneration for new ideological ends, using it to aid in the creation of sacral kingship. Late Antique Christian thinkers were rather fond of the horse, lauding it for its loyalty and intellect. Isidore writes:

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[67] See above, 106.
[68] John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167-8.
[69] Ibid., 171.
[70] Fern, "Horses in Mind," 151.

> Inde et sonipes, quod pedibus sonat. Vivacitas equorum multa: exultant enim in campis; odorantur bellum; excitantur sono tubae ad proelium; voce accensi ad cursum provocantur; dolent cum victi fuerint; exultant cum vicerint. Quidam hostes in bello sentiunt, adeo ut adversarios morsu petant: aliqui etiam proprios dominos recognoscunt, obliti mansuetudinis si mutentur; aliqui praeter dominum dorso nullum recipiunt: interfectis vel morientibus dominis multi lacrimas fundunt. Solum enim equum propter hominem lacrimare et doloris affectum sentire.[71]

["Horses have a great deal of liveliness, for they revel in open country; they scent out war; they are roused to battle by the sound of the trumpet; when incited by a voice they are challenged to race, grieving when they are defeated, and exultant when they are victorious. Some recognize the enemy in war and seek to bite the foe. Some also respond to their own masters, and lose their tameness if their ownership changes. Some will allow no one on their back except their master; many of them shed tears when their master dies or is killed, for only the horse weeps and feels grief over humans."]

Horses' perceived natural instincts for war and emotional attachment to their masters made them excellent models for human behavior (and later part of the chivalric

[71] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII.i.42.

identity machine).[72] The dedication they showed to their riders could be thought of as akin to a retainer's loyalty to the king, and horses were an important currency in the system of reciprocation between lord and subject. The best horses were owned by the aristocracy and thought of as valuable enough to be noted in the wills of some of the most powerful men in early medieval England.[73] Along with weapons, armor, gold and other material objects, horses were granted both as a reward for loyal service and as a means to continue and improve upon that service. *Beowulf* describes two scenes of such a transaction: Hrothgar's gift of horses to Beowulf after Grendel's defeat and Beowulf passing these on to his own lord, Hygelac.[74] Love for one's lord would be reciprocated by his gift, the horse, and it is no coincidence that the animal is among the lost joys lamented in *The Wanderer*, whose speaker asks, "*Hwær com mearg? Hwær com mago? Hwær com maþþumgyfa*?" ("Where is the horse? Where is the warrior? Where is the giver of treasure?").[75]

Like with falcons and hawks, we know that the clergy appreciated horses judging by the stern rebukes issued to them, including for horse-racing.[76] That they would enjoy the animals is hardly surprising given the aristocratic background of many in the church and the training with the animals they may have received before

[72] See Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, chp. 2. Like most animals, horses are not naturally inclined for war, preferring to avoid conflict rather than move towards it. Elaine Walker, *Horse* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 19.
[73] A notable example is the will of Æthelstan Atheling (Sawyer 1503), who left to his father, King Æthelred, both a white horse and one gifted to him by Thurbrand and also left steeds to Bishop Ælfsige and his mass-priest Ælfwine (along with the horse's trappings).
[74] Lns. 1035-49 and 2163-2175a. For the relationship between those horses imagined in the poem and the actual animals that populated Anglo-Saxon England, see Jennifer Neville, "Hrothgar's Horses: Feral or Thoroughbred?" *ASE* 35 (2006): 131-57.
[75] Ln. 92. My translation consulted the text and glossary in *Eight Old English Poems*.
[76] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 95-97.

becoming clerics. Churches also maintained horses themselves. The wisdom poetry these clerics produced often discusses the supplementary power of the horse in establishing human identity, lordly and otherwise. *The Gifts of Men* identifies one whose defining talent is that he "*bið meares gleaw*" ("is discerning of horses"), and, later, one who "*bið to horse hwæt*" ("is quick on a horse").[77] *Maxims I* states that "*Eorl sceal on eos boge*" ("An earl shall be on the back of the horse").[78]

The strategy of aligning the horse's physicality with the expression of sovereignty appears in the Old English *Elene*, found in the Vercelli Book. In Cynewulf's poem, the horse is part of an assemblage that imagines Constantine as the ideal of a Germanic Christian king, a circuit responsible for the rapid expansion of Christianity and eventually the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon themselves. As part of this process, we see Constantine's development mirror that of the early Anglo-Saxons, at least as thought by Cynewulf. Beliefs in the old symbols of power, epitomized by the boar-image that recurs in the poem, are discarded, the animal images becoming only metaphor behind the supreme and real power of the Cross. *Elene* is an origin story for Anglo-Saxon Christianity and holy sovereignty more generally.

The relation of animal and ruler in *Elene* differs from the relation of animal and warrior we saw in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*. The kind of animal becoming that Beowulf and Abraham's army display would be out of place in *Elene*, a work interested in the

[77] Lns. 69b and 81b.
[78] Ln. 62a.

power of God, as manifested through the force of the Cross, to intervene in human affairs and support a good Christian sovereign.[79] While Abraham's success can only come to one who has faith, the physical means of his victory is not from a literal apotropaic weapon of God but through the strategies he uses to overcome his great numerical disadvantage, a ferocious means of combat imagined as "wolfish." In contrast, *Elene* is about a force external to the human body that is harnessed through material objects, through a prosthetic that requires the alliance of human and animal. It is a prosthetic that betrays how sovereignty itself is prosthetic.

Tacitus observed that the Germanic tribes fought naked and, unlike the Romans, did not seem interested in wearing armor. Describing the Aestii, he noted that "*Matrem deum venerantur, isigne superstitionis formas aprorum gestant: id pro armis omnique tutela securum deae cultorem etiam inter hosted praestat*" ("They worship the Mother of the Gods and as a symbol of that cult they wear the figure of a wild boar. They all carry this instead of weapons: it is a protection for the worshipper of the goddess even in the midst of his enemies").[80] Around 600 years later, the Anglo-Saxons had kept this dedication to the power of animal images, including the boar, which one can find throughout Anglo-Saxon material culture, most famously on the helmets from Sutton Hoo and Benty Grange. The Benty Grange helmet in particular proves there was continuity between the beliefs underlying the perceived apotropaic qualities of animal

[79] For a discussion of "becoming" in *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*, see above 114-41.
[80] *Germania* XLV.

and the symbols of the new faith, featuring as it does both the boar-image and the cross.[81] *Elene* enacts the transference of such belief, the abandoning of what the poem sees as the metaphorical power of the animal image with the actualized, embodied might of the Cross.

Posthumanist thought has foregrounded the idea that human identity is established in part by the material objects that adorn and enhance the fleshly body. The combination of flesh and technology can be located to its greatest extent in the figure known as the "cyborg."[82] The cyborg is familiar to us from an expansive body of speculative fiction. One can list any number of famous cyborgs, from the conflicted Darth Vader of George Lucas' *Star Wars* films ("More machine now than man, twisted and evil," as Obi-Wan Kenobi characterizes him in *A New Hope*)[83] or the sardonic Marvel superhero Iron Man, who relies on his metal suit and the electromagnet he has placed inside his body to survive and fight terrorism. The notion of the "prosthesis," though, has been a subject of great interest as well to posthumanist scholars and those in the field of disability studies.[84] Material prosthetics (such as an artificial limb or ocular implant) are used to enhance the body's fleshly capabilities, often to replace what has been lost to injury or illness. It is related to the

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[81] See above, 90-91.

[82] The foundational posthumanist study of the cyborg is Donna J. Haraway, "Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review* 80 (1985): 65-108 and has been reprinted in Donna J. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 3-90.

[83] *Star Wars*, directed by George Lucas (1977; Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2013), Blu-ray.

[84] See David T. Michell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000). See also Sarah Coffey, "Prosthesis," The Chicago School of Media Theory, https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/prosthesis/ (accessed on 8/19/2016).

idea, most notably written about by Derrida, of the "supplement," that something excluded from or external to the "human" is in fact necessary in defining what the human actually is and exposes the lack it is intended to fill.[85] The prosthesis/supplement draws attention to the incompletion of the human subject and the necessity to supplement it with materials and ideas it is not born with. One of the central tenets of critical animal theory is that animals are ubiquitous supplements in constructing the human.

The power (or lack thereof) of these externalities to the body and their role in the production of sovereignty is a subject Cynewulf explores in *Elene*. The discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem takes up most of *Elene*, but an interest in the power of the Cross against the power of older, more traditional talismans is present in the two portions about Constantine than begin and end the poem. *Elene* starts with the heathen Constantine and his conflict with the (also) heathen Germanic tribes, a group that includes the Huns, who Bede believed were ancestors of some of the Anglo-Saxons.[86] He is called a "*riht cyning*" ("just king") for his efficacy as a "protector" (*guðweard*) of his subjects.[87] The opening of the poem stresses the importance of the tale to come by placing Constantine's exploits in the overarching narrative of Christian history, 223 years after the birth of Christ.[88]

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[85] For a brief summary on Derrida's concept of the "supplement," see Jack Reynolds, "Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)," at the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, http://www.iep.utm.edu/derrida/ (accessed 09/07/16).
[86] *HE* V.9.
[87] Lns. 13b-14a.
[88] Lns. 1-7a. Cynewulf's calculation, however, is a bit skewed as he places the events of the poem long before they

As the forces on both sides approach the battlefield, two of the beasts of battle, the wolf and the eagle, make an appearance:

> For folca gedryht. Fyrd-leoð agol
> wulf on wealde, wæl-rune ne mað.
> Urig-feðera earn sang ahof,
> laðum on laste. (27-30a).

["The host of tribes approached. The wolf in the forest chanted a war-song, he did not hide his slaughter rune. The dewy-feathered eagle sang upwards, behind the tracks of the hateful ones."]

A third beast of battle, the raven, shows up a little later along with a fourth animal:

> Hrefen uppe gol,
> wan ond wæl-fel. Werod wæs on tyhte.
> Hleopon horn-boran, hreopan friccan,
> mearh moldan træd. (52b-55a)

["The raven cried aloft, dark and cruel to the slain. The army was on the march. The trumpeters ran, the heralds cried out, the horse tread the earth."]

The wolf, in its familiar abode, the "*weald*" (BT "wood, forest"), sings its "*fyrdleoð*" (*DOE* "war-song"), the otherness of that sound (and by extension the wolf itself) expressed through its identification as a "*wælrun*" ("slaughter rune").[89] The fact that it

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actually happened, a mistake he inherited from his source. See *Cynewulf's Elene*, rev. ed., ed. P.O.E. Gradon (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 17-18. I have consulted the glossary in Gradon's edition for my translations of *Elene*.

[89] As R.I. Page notes, "OE *run* and its cognates in other languages have meanings like 'council, counsel, consultation,'

"did not hide" ("*ne mað*") that song may have called to mind the idea of wolves as indiscriminate killers. In a move that is unique to *Elene*, however, horses are described at the battle too, an early nod towards their importance to the spread of Christianity described at the poem's end. The beasts of battle here are enveloped by lines describing the approach of the Germanic tribes, which maps the animals' desire for carnage onto the tribesmen, thought irrational for their heathenism.

The Romans are vastly outnumbered in this battle, and this fact, much like in *Genesis A*, will emphasize God's power when the eventual victory comes. At first, though, the long odds trouble the king, but as he sleeps that night, he receives a "*swefnes woma*" ("harbinger of a dream"). An angel comes to him, called an "*ar*" (*DOE* "messenger, envoy, emissary") and "*fæle friðowebba*" (*DOE* "faithful weaver of peace"), and makes a promise the king will not forget[90]:

He of slæpe onbrægd,
eofur-cumble beþeaht. Him se ar hraðe,
wlitig wuldres boda, wið þingode
ond be naman nemde, (niht-helm toglad):
Constantinus, heht þe cyning engla,
wyrda wealdend, wære beodan,

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and often carry the sense of secrecy, mystery, isolation, and sometimes of esoteric knowledge, even of secret scripts." See R.I. Page, "Runes" in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 414-15.

[90] The *friþowebba/ friþuwebbe* has elicited a great deal of scholarly attention, but as Baker argues, peace does not mean the total absence of conflict but rather a state in which violent hostility is no longer occurring. See Baker, *Honour, Exchange, and Violence*, 130-31. The angel here is giving Constantine the violent power necessary to defeat his enemies, which anticipates him receiving the force of the nails of the True Cross, as I discuss below at 179-83.

duguða dryhten. Ne ondræd þu ðe,

ðeah þe elþeodige egesan hwopan,

heardre hilde; þu to heofenum beseoh

on wuldres weard, þær ðu wraðe findest,

sigores tacen. (75b-85a)

["He started up from sleep, covered by the boar-image. The envoy, the beautiful messenger of glory, quickly spoke to him and called him by his name – the cover of night departed: 'Constantine! The king of angels, the ruler of fates, the lord of hosts, commanded a pledge offered to you. Do not dread though the barbarous ones threaten with terror and cruel battle. Look to the heavens on the guardian of glory, there you will find support, a symbol of victory."]

The message of the angel's speech is clear: The power of God will overcome any threat to Constantine, no matter how overpowering said threat might appear to be, if the ruler just places his belief in the protection he is promised. When he does so, his anxiety will end. What is interesting for our purposes, though, is the contrast between the power of the "*sigores tacen*," the Cross, and the "*eoforcumbul*" of line 76. "*Cumbol*" means "banner," and the *DOE* defines "*eoforcumbul*," a word appearing only in *Elene*, as meaning either "boar-standard" or "boar-helmet."[91] The imagery paints Constantine as a Germanic warrior-figure. We have had reason to mention the boar-

[91] *DOE Online* s.v. *eoforcumbul.*

helmets on several occasions already,[92] but we also have it on good authority—Bede's—that early Anglo-Saxon rulers, such as Edwin of Northumbria, had standards carried before them as they traversed their kingdoms, perhaps ones displaying boars.[93] The appearance of the boar-image is a subtle way that Cynewulf changes his narrative to emphasize Constantine's role as intermediary between Germanic and Christian history and native Anglo-Saxon and Roman culture. Constantine becomes almost a human analogue to the Benty Grange helmet's combination of Christian and Germanic iconography.

Such a desire to show the power of Christian protection as greater than the traditional sources of apotropaic protection appears elsewhere in the poetic corpus, including in *Beowulf*. The part I have in mind is the Finn episode when Hildeburh sees her slain husband Hnæf and her sons placed on the funeral pyre. The passage reads:

> Ad wæs geæfned ond icge gold
> ahæfen of horde. Here-Scyldinga
> betst beado-rinca wæs on bæl gearu.
> Æt þæm ade wæs eþ-gesyne
> swat-fah syrce, swyn eal gylden,
> eofer iren-heard, æþeling manig
> wundum awyrded; sume on wæle crungon. (1107-1113)

[92] See above, 90-92 and 172-73.
[93] *HE* II.16.

["The pyre was readied and shining gold taken from the hoard. The best of the Herescylding warriors was ready on the fire. At the pyre, a coat of mail, stained with blood, was easily visible, a swine all of gold, a boar hard as iron, many nobles destroyed by wound; ones killed in the slaughter."]

As both Robinson and Owen-Crocker have noted, there is a tension in this passage between the descriptions of the heroes' armor and their deaths.[94] The "*syrce*" ("coat of mail") and "*swyn ealgylden*" ("swine all of gold") were meant to protect the fallen but ultimately failed and will be destroyed by the fire like those they were meant to save. Implicit here is the comparison between the power of pagan talismans in guarding the life of their wearer and the power God has in protecting the Christian (or at least ensuring a happy afterlife), a difference the Scyldings in the poem would tragically have no knowledge of.

Returning to *Elene*, Cynewulf has a different stance on the boar-image. Constantine uses the power of the cross to defeat the Germanic tribes (the poem notes the king was given "*rice under roderum þurh his rode treo*," or "power under the skies through his rood-tree"),[95] banishing them to the borders of Christian space, "*ymb Danubie*" ("around the Danube"),[96] like the beasts they were thought to be. The king is soon after converted, and as the shepherd of his people, they too take the new faith. His next order of business is to locate the True Cross, sending his mother to

[94] Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, 70; Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons*, 85-86.
[95] Ln. 147.
[96] Ln. 136a.

Jerusalem to find it. Cynewulf imagines the splendor of the Roman expeditionary troop as it voyages to the Holy Land, and in line 259a, he mentions how the troop carried an "*ænlic eoforcumbul*" ("unique boar-image"). The boar-image, even after the conversion to Christianity, is retained, any apotropaic power it was thought to have possessed proven useless next to the protective Christian might the Romans now possess. In doing so, it was been rendered nonthreatening and, solely metaphorical, a sign that can remain.

After locating the Cross, Elene then desires one more discovery: to find the nails that were used to crucify Christ. Through the prayer of Cyriacus (the former Judas), they are located, but what to do with them? The queen summons a wise man to help her solve this puzzle, and he advises her to

> þu ðas næglas hat
> þam æðelestan eorð-cyninga
> burga-gendra on his bridels don,
> meare to midlum. Þæt manigum sceall
> geond middan-geard mære weorðan,
> þonne æt sæcce mid þy oferswiðan mæge
> feonda gehwylcne, þonne fyrd-hwate
> on twa healfe tohtan secaþ,
> sweord-geniðlan, þær hie sigor willað,
> wrað wið wraðum. (1172b-1181a)

["Implore the noblest of earthly kings and rulers of cities to place the nails on his bridle, a bit for the horse. It will become famous to many throughout middle-earth, when with it he will overcome each foe in combat, when warriors, the brave, seek battle on two sides, where they desire victory, enemy against enemy."]

The supplementary power of the nails becomes a source for Constantine's sovereignty, part of a circuit containing Constantine himself, his horse, bridle, and his political agency as emperor. Constantine's role will be to use this newfound power to overcome a nonhuman, irrational, and dangerous force: heathenism, the archenemy of the Christian sovereign. That this circuit includes a horse would resound with an Anglo-Saxon audience and its veneration for that animal. However, this is a circuit with power on a previously unrealized level. Constantine possesses a force capable of conquering entire nations, a scale open to him given his imperial might. The sovereign sought to express power in a way that would make the sovereign appear always present, that would lessen the appearance of time and space. The Cross works especially to support that goal for the newly converted Constantine.[97]

The next few lines focus on the ability of the nails to defend the one who carries them:

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[97] Anglo-Saxon leaders were anxious to prevent horses from falling into Viking hands for that reason. The mobility provided by the Scandinavians' longboats was imposing enough, but their being highly mobile throughout the countryside was an even more terrifying prospect. The C version of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describes an attack by Olaf and Swein in 994. They unsuccessfully attempt to harry London, but the *Chronicle* mentions that they then move into the countryside and wreak havoc once they "*namon him hors*" ("took themselves horses"). A similar situation occurs in 999 when the Danes invade Kent and defeat the English armies there. The possession of horses once again grants the Danes an improved ability to strike at the English heartlands as they "*ridan swa hwider swa hi sylf woldon*" ("rode whither as they themselves wished"). Finally, in 1010, the Danes attacking East Anglia capture horses and are then able to move with ease between the sites they are plundering and their own ships.

He ah æt wigge sped,

sigor æt sæcce, ond sybbe gehwær,

æt gefeohte frið, se ðe foran lædeð

bridels on blancan, þonne beadu-rofe

æt gar-þræce, guman gecoste,

berað bord ond ord. Þis bið beorna gehwam

wið æglæca unoferswiðed

wæpen æt wigge. (1181b-1188a)

["He will have success at warfare, victory in battle, and everywhere safety, protection in the fight, he who in front brings the bridle on a steed, when tried men, renowned in war, bear shield and spear into battle. This shall be to each man an invincible weapon in battle against distress."]

The protective force of the nails is highlighted by the use of the words "*syb*" ("peace") and "*friþ*" ("protection"), terms that suggest the creation of order on a much grander scale than the personal safety of Constantine himself. Whereas the boar was unable to protect the Romans from the encroaching Germanic tribes, the nails have the power to save an entire world. The power of the Cross becomes for Constantine something like the "irresponsibility" Derrida identifies in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, making the Roman ruler not only outside the "law" in the sense of the legal code but also the physical laws of animal and human that saw the human as capable of being harmed by

the Other.[98] In other words, Constantine is absolute in his capacity to successfully wield violence to expand Christianity. The prosthetic power of the cross is assured, automatic, and autopositioning. He need not answer to anyone because he the power not to. If physical force, carried great distances by the horse, was valuable currency for the early medieval ruler, the nails make Constantine the wealthiest king on Earth, one who need not worry about any other power. He is successfully placed outside the responsibility to terrestrial law as wielder of the heavenly law, and the only one he answers to is God.

This is supported by the final part of the wise man's speech, some of which directly quotes Zechariah 14.20[99]:

> Cuþ þæt gewyrðeð þæt þæs cyninges sceal
> mearh under modegum midlum geweorðod,
> bridels-hringum. Bið þæt beacen gode
> halig nemned, ond se hwæt-eadig,
> wigge weorðod, se þæt wicg byrð. (1191-1195)

["It will become known that the horse of the king shall be honored by the proud ones by its bit and bridle-rings. That sign will be called holy to God, and the one fortunate, honored in warfare, who that horse bears."]

The horse itself is emphasized here, since whomever it carries will gain the power of

[98] See above, 155-56.

[99] The passage from Zechariah reads, "*In die illa erit quod super frenum equi est sanctum Domino*" ("In that day that which is upon the bridle of the horse shall be holy to the Lord"). The nails are the source of this holiness in our passage above, a holiness that is passed on to whomever is associated with the bridle.

the holy nails. The horse is therefore a necessary part of this sovereign assemblage. It is a being whose swiftness can be analogized to the speed of Christianity's expansion, vital to the success in war Constantine will need to achieve it, and an animal supplement to a king who was a model for Anglo-Saxon rulers.

The items that Constantine carried would be the same items that would help to define Anglo-Saxon kingship. For Anglo-Saxon kings, a piece of the True Cross was one of the most valuable material objects one could possess, a confirmation of the power needed to acquire it and an item that imparted power itself. Asser recounts how the pope Marinus sent Alfred part of the Cross,[100] and other Anglo-Saxon kings received such a gift as well.[101] The saddle too was an image of kingship, the narrator of *Beowulf* referring to it as the "*hildesetl*" ("battle-throne").[102] When Godric betrays the fallen Byrhtnoth in *Maldon* and rides away from the battle with his kinsmen, what makes his crime all the more heinous is that "*he gehleop þone eoh þe ahte his hlaford, / on þam gerædum*; *þe hit riht ne wæs*" ("he leapt upon the horse that his lord had owned, on the trapping; it was not right.").[103] Like an outlaw, Godric flees to the forest, and the severity of this offense, one against the symbol of his lord's sovereignty, is displayed by the poem's emphatic "*þe hit riht ne wæs*." Constantine, thanks to his bridle, would not have to suffer such setbacks.

[100] *Vita Alfredi* ch. 71.
[101] See Gradon, *Cynewulf's Elene*, 23n4.
[102] *Beowulf*, ln. 1039a.
[103] Lns. 189-190.

CHAPTER 4

THE SAINTLY ANIMAL

In 1921, E.T. Leeds, then the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the University of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, received word that there were objects that may interest him at a nearby site, Sutton Courtenay. Leeds' curiosity was piqued by the promise of items that could bolster the Ashmolean's collection of artifacts from the "late-Celtic periods," but he would find much more while excavating the site.[1] In fact, Sutton Courtenay would yield so many discoveries that Leeds would publish three reports on the settlement in the journal *Archaeologia* between 1923 and 1947.[2] Work there has continued into this century, most prominently by Helena Hamerow and by a group filming an episode for the British Channel 4 reality television series, *Time Team*.[3]

Sutton Courtenay had been occupied seasonally in the prehistoric period before becoming a year-round residence during the Roman occupation.[4] As they often did with formerly inhabited spaces, the Anglo-Saxons appropriated the site for their own settlement, building several timber halls and a number of "sunken-feature buildings"

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[1] E.T. Leeds, "A Saxon Village Near Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire," *Archaeologia* 73 (1923): 147-8.
[2] Leeds, "Saxon Village"; E. Thurlow Leeds, "A Saxon Village Near Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire (Second Report)," *Archaeologia* 76 (1927): 59-80; E. Thurlow Leeds, "A Saxon Village Near Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire, Third Report," *Archaeologia* 92 (1947): 79-93.
[3] See Helena Hamerow, "'Special Deposits' in Anglo-Saxon Settlements," *Medieval Archaeology* 50 (2006): 1-30 and Helena Hamerow, Chris Hayden and Gill Hey, "Anglo-Saxon and Earlier Settlement Near Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire," *Archaeological Journal* 164 (2007): 109-196. The *Time Team* excavation took place in June 2009, and Wessex Archaeology has published its findings on the Internet. See "Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Excavation and Assessment of Results," Wessex Archaeology Online, May 23, 2011, http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/reports/71505/sutton-courtenay-oxfordshire (accessed 11/27/16).
[4] Leeds, "Saxon Village" (1923), 167.

(SFBs, also known by their German name, *Grubenhäuser*), referred to as such today because their foundations were dug beneath ground level.[5] Leeds discovered items deposited below ground inside or adjacent to these buildings, and it has since been determined that some of these objects were buried when the structures were being constructed.[6] These items are now commonly known as "special deposits."[7]

Hamerow defines the special deposit as a collection that "mostly [comprises] animal or human remains deposited within settlements (in pits, ditches, buildings but also graves) where deliberate and careful placement appears likely, e.g. due to the completeness and position of the deposit."[8] She has identified forty-two of these deposits spread across sixteen Anglo-Saxon settlements, though they also appear at sites from Roman Britain and throughout the North Sea Zone.[9] Cattle are the animals most commonly found in special deposits, but many other species that live close to humans appear in these collections too – even a goose and a cat have been discovered. Relative to their numbers in Anglo-Saxon bone assemblages more generally, however, the two animals that are best represented are horses and dogs, both of which were discovered at Sutton Courtenay.[10] Hamerow notes that their frequency can be "explained by the special status that dogs and horses often occupy

[5] Hamerow et al., "Anglo-Saxon and Earlier Settlement," 109.
[6] Hamerow, "Special Deposits," 3n10.
[7] Hamerow inherits the term "special deposit" from Annie Grant, "Ritual Behaviour: the Special Bone Deposits," in *Danebury: An Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire*, Vol. 2: The Excavations, 1969-1978: the Finds, ed. Barry Cunliffe, CBA Research Report 52 (CBA: London, 1984), 533–43.
[8] Hamerow, "'Special Deposits,'" 2.
[9] Ibid., see especially 19-26.
[10] Ibid., 8.

because of their close relationship with humans and their role, at least in the cases of horses, as 'status symbols.'"[11] As we saw in the last chapter, the horse was noted for its ferocity in combat, association with nobility, and for its aid in transportation and manual labor. It may have even been venerated in a preconversion cult.[12]

The meaning behind the frequency of the dog is less clear. Dog bones appear in these deposits both as fully articulated and as partial skeletons. For instance, a pit near House VII at Sutton Courtenay contained a dog skull and disarticulated dog bones alongside an articulated horse skeleton.[13] The findings at House XVII and at Mucking, though, may be the most interesting dog deposits. At the former site, a dog limb was discovered in both the east and west postholes of the building, presumably placed there when the structure was being made,[14] while at Mucking, a dog skeleton was located in an SFB's posthole.[15] Hamerow notes that the Sutton Courtenay deposits cannot be conclusively dated, but Mucking's skeleton appears to come from the fifth or sixth century.[16] Another canine deposit, a dog skull in a pit at Wharram Percy, is believed to be as late as the seven or eighth century,[17] around the same time

[11] Ibid., 20.
[12] See above, 167-71.
[13] Leeds, "Saxon Village" (1923), 163-5.
[14] Leeds, "Second Report," 71.
[15] Helena Hamerow, *Excavations at Mucking,* Vol. 2: The Anglo-Saxon Settlement (London: English Heritage in Association with British Museum Press, 1993), 14. In this earlier study, Hamerow notes that the "dog skeleton had slipped into the eastern posthole" (Ibid.), but in her later assessment of special deposits, she lists the Mucking dog as a human placement ("'Special Deposits,'" 5 [Table 1]).
[16] Hamerow, "'Special Deposits,'" 5 (Table 1).
[17] P. Stamper and R.A. Croft, *Wharram, A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds*, Vol. VIII: The South Manor Area (York: University of York Archaeology Department, 2000), 37 (Pl. 4).

that the last non-Christian Anglo-Saxon ruler converted.[18]

Gale R. Owen-Crocker suggests that the deposited dog limbs at Sutton Courtenay were the product of a sacrificial ritual, one where the slain animal would have been thought to become a "guardian spirit" permanently associated with the building.[19] Two isolated dog skeletons (one a fragment), however, is little evidence on its own for such a belief. Further, James Morris and Ben Jervis have rejected the assumptions behind the term "special deposit" and "[argue] that all depositional activity should be seen as multi-thematic rather than simply functional or 'ritual.' Instead of imposing an artificial dichotomy, belief systems and superstitions should be seen as integrated within everyday life and as being active in the constitution and reconstitution of a society."[20] Each deposit tells its own story, each reflects "different human actions and motives,"[21] and to understand that story, one must "[draw] on contemporary literature, historical and archaeological evidence."[22]

Allow me, then, to submit the following as literary evidence that may help us to understand these dog deposits:

> Þy mergenlican dæge, ær þam þe he fram þam cempum acweald wære, þyssum wordum he ongan gebiddan and cweþan: "Drihten ælmihtig, þu ðe me of gedwolan gehwyrfest ond godne wisdom gelærdest, þæt ic þin

[18] Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, 77.
[19] Owen, *Rites and Rituals*, 48.
[20] James Morris and Ben Jervis, "What's So Special? A Reinterpretation of Anglo-Saxon 'Special Deposits,'" *Medieval Archaeology* 55 (2011): 66.
[21] Ibid., 69.
[22] Ibid., 78.

> þeow nu on þysse tide þe bidde gearwa, hyt unne þætte on swa hwylcre stowe swa mines lichaman ænig dæl sy, ne sy þær ne wædl ne fyres broga.[23]

["The next morning, before he was to be killed by the soldiers, he began to pray with these words and said: 'Lord almighty, you who turned me from error and taught me good wisdom, I, your servant now in this time, clearly asks it, that in any place that any portion of my body may be, there not be want there nor the terror of fire.'"] Many will no doubt recognize this as the prayer of a saint. The holy often found themselves in situations where they had to deal with the unpredictable and destructive force of fire. Saints like Martin were able to extinguish flames, whether real or some diabolic illusion, through their prayers, and this protection could extend to those who placed their faith in the saint.[24] As the passage above indicates, though, this protection was also thought to rely on the immediate presence of the saint in the form of a piece of his or her body: a relic.[25] The introduction of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England also meant the introduction of saints and relics, and the new faith is often thought to

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[23] All quotations of *The Passion of Saint Christopher* are from the edition in Fulk, *The Beowulf Manuscript*; at 8. Translations are my own, and I have consulted Fulk's translation and the glossary provided by Phillip Pulsiano, "*The Passion of Saint Christopher*: An Edition," in *Early Medieval Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2002), 167-200.

[24] *Vita Martini* XIV.1-2. Martin sets fire to a pagan shrine, but the wind pushes the flame onto a nearby house. Martin ascends to the roof of the building, and because of his holy power, the fire is blown away.

[25] Much work has been done on the economic imperative that religious houses had to own relics of prominent saints and to ensure the public believed those relics were efficacious. The goal was to use the relics to increase traffic to a shrine and attract the attention of wealthy patrons. Kenneth Sisam suggests that the creation of the Cotton Vitellius A.XV Christopher *passio* was for this purpose, to spread awareness of the saint's relics and their efficacy. See Kenneth Sisam, "The Compilation of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript," in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, 70-72. For a discussion on relics in Anglo-Saxon England more generally, see Michael Lapidge, "The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 251-254. See also Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1978), for the importance of relics in the later Middle Ages.

have rendered practices like the depositions at Sutton Courtenay and Mucking obsolete (or at least more rare).[26] By introducing a new form of sacrificial power, one emanating from heaven, Christianity eliminated the need to slaughter dogs and horses on Earth for safety. But the idea of dogs as protective beings that gave their lives to protect humans would not go away; instead, it would be appropriated with the introduction to Anglo-Saxon England of a saint from a faraway land, one whose popularity may also allow us to see the canine deposits in a new light. This saint is the speaker in the above passage, Christopher, a being who was thought to be part-dog.

In this chapter, I argue that the belief in the protective power of the dog expressed in the deposits at Mucking and Sutton Courtenay found a Christian utilization in the cult of the cynocephalus Christopher, a sinful being who found salvation and promised safety to his followers with the holy power derived from his death. To address the question of why a doghead would be believable as a vessel for sanctity in Late Antiquity and the early medieval period, I examine debates about the ontological status of dogheads and the cultural history of dogs. To this point, I have looked at how animals were used by the Anglo-Saxons to define human identities, a process that saw humans "becoming-animal," and argued that syncretic blending of preconversion and various Christian beliefs about the permeability of the human-animal divide created a culture where such narratives of "becoming" could proliferate. This dual inheritance also allowed a "becoming-human" to appear, even one featuring

[26] For the effect Christianity had on native rituals, see Hinton, *Archaeology, Economy and Society,* 32.

a figure who was like a dog, an animal the Judeo-Christian tradition depicted ambivalently but was "borderline…in so many ways that its marginality has mythic proportions."[27] I differ from most other examinations of the Christopher tradition in Anglo-Saxon England in my argument that the passion's message relies on an understanding of the saint as canine, which in turn allows the audience to experience a kind of "becoming-dog," imagining their own selves through the cynocephalus. Finally, reading Christopher in this way helps us to better understand the place of real-life dogs in Anglo-Saxon England. We have caught brief glimpses of their lives (and deaths) in the special deposits, and more will be gleamed from their appearances in laws and from anecdotes like that found in Asser's life of Alfred. Dogs and saints, as we will see, shared many characteristics, and spreading tales of Saint Christopher may have been one way of commemorating animals who gave humans so much.

Who Let the Dogheads Out?

"*Quid dicam de Cynocephalis*," Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, "*quorum canina capita atque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines confiteturi*?" ("And what am I to say of those dog-headed men whose dogs' heads and actual barking show that they are more beasts than men?").[28] We will return to the bishop of Hippo in a moment, but as one might expect, there were few easy answers in determining what manner of being the dogheads were. They presented a problem of classification, possessing, as Karl Steel

[27] Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), 62.
[28] *De civitate Dei* XVI.8 [CPL 0313]. The citation is by book and chapter, and the translation is from *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); at 708.

writes, "the human's bipedal and erect body, conducive to nonappetitive, celestial thought, and thus the material form of reason" but also an "animal head, suggesting governance by bestial instincts and filthy desires."[29] Looking at the response to dogheads late in the Middle Ages, Joyce Salisbury argues that "when the texts wrote of humans, giants, and Cynocephali that eat raw meat, and indeed raw human meat, people immediately thought of these creatures as animal…the cynocephali that people believed shared many human qualities were securely defined as animals because they ate humans."[30] There appeared to be less certainty in the classical and early medieval periods.

The idea of the cynocephalus emerged from the perceived liminality of dogs. According to David Gordon White, who has written the most extensive study on the origin of the cynocephali, the dog, "with its ambiguous roles and cultural values, its constant presence in human experience coupled with its nearness to the feral world, is the alter ego of man himself, a reflection of both human culture and human savagery."[31] This simultaneous humanity and animality, to classical thinkers like Megasthenes, Herodotus, Ctesias, and Pliny, was shared by foreign races (some of whom were dogheaded) who, on account of their otherness, "inhabited a space, in the human imagination, between the exotic and therefore fascinating, and the horrifying:

[29] Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 141.
[30] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 130.
[31] David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15.

animal freedom is as fascinating as animal savagery is terrifying."[32] Such liminality was also to be found in the divine, and gods' status as both human and nonhuman led to cynocephalic deities like the Egyptians' Anubis, a god of burial with the body of a man and the head of a jackal, the Greeks' canine-associated Hermes, and the composite Hermanubis, who came to be after Egypt came into contact with Greek culture.[33] Laura Hobgood-Oster sees Hermanubis as an origin for later stories about Christopher, [34] a lineage supported by the fact that Hermes was a patron of travelers and transport and that one of the most notable stories about Christopher was that he ferried Christ across a river.[35]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] The ancient Egyptians, as one might expect from a civilization with a venerated canine deity, display great appreciation for the dog, shown, as Christine Morris notes, by the "tomb imagery where dogs sit under their owners' seats, by the fact they are given personal names (and unusually among animals these are sometimes names used for humans), and by the excavation of burials of treasured canine companions" ("Animals into Art in the Ancient World," in *A Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity*, ed. Linda Kalof [Oxford: Berg, 2007], 183). For the place of dogs in Ancient Greek culture, see Susan McHugh, *Dog* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 40-46.

[34] Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illnois Press, 2008), 84. Regarding Hermanubis, Isidore thought the god was dogheaded because of the intelligence of canines (*Etymologiae* VIII.xi.49).

[35] A version of this story is found in the late medieval hagiographic collection called the *Legenda Aurea*, or "The Golden Legend," written by Jacobus de Voragine. After his conversion, Christopher builds himself a shelter next to a dangerous river, using his great size to assist travelers in crossing it. Jacobus recounts how

> Evolutis multis diebus cum in domuncula sua quiesceret, audivit vocem cujusdam pueri se vocantis et dicentis: Christophore, veni foras et me ipsum traducas. Concitus Christophorus exsiliit, sed neminem reperit, rediensque in domunculam suam praedictam iterum vocem se acclamantis audivit. Qui rursus foras cucurrit et neminem invenit. Tertia vice ab eodem ut prius vocatus exiit et puerum quendam juxta ripam fluminis invenit, qui Christophorum, ut se traduceret, obnie rogavit. Christophorus igitur puerum sibi in humeris elevans et baculum suum accipiens flument transiturus intravit. Et ecce aqua fluminis paulatim intumescebat et puer instar plumbi gravissime ponderabat, quantoque magis procedebat, tanto amplius unda crescebat et puer magis ac magis Christophori humeros pondere intolerabili deprimebat, adeo ut Christophorus in augustia multa positus esset et se periclitari formidaret.

["Many days later he was resting in his shelter when he heard a child's voice calling him: 'Christopher, come out and carry me across!' He jumped to his feet and went out, but found no one. He went indoors and again heard the same voice calling him, but ran out and again saw no one. The third time he responded to the same call and found a child standing on the riverbank. The child begged [Christopher] to carry him across the river, and Christopher lifted him to his shoulders, grasped his great staff, and strode into the water. But little by little the water grew rougher and the child became as heavy as lead: the farther he went, the higher rose the waves, and the weight of the child pressed down upon

Pliny would be the chief source on the cynocephali for later thinkers like Augustine, Isidore, and the ninth-century monk Ratramnus of Corbie. Details about the dogheads would also be transmitted by way of more secular texts like the Alexander legends and the *Wonders of the East* tradition, versions of which appear in the *Beowulf*-manuscript alongside the Christopher *passio*.[36] As I mentioned before, these texts disagree on the "question of the doghead," whether they were more human or more bestial. Citing Megasthenes, Pliny notes that "*in multis autem montibus genus hominum capitibus caninis ferarum pellibus velari, pro voce latratum edere, unguibus armatum venatu et aucupio vesci*" ("on many of the mountains there is a tribe of human beings with dogs' heads, who wear a covering of wild beasts' skins, whose speech is a bark and who live on the produce of hunting and fowling, for which they use their nails as weapons").[37] Like other dangerous creatures, the dogheads live outside the boundaries of civilized space and in distant, inaccessible places, here the mountains of India.[38] They also displayed the bestial trait of relying on their bodies alone to hunt and fowl, not requiring any external technology like spears or nets. Ultimately, Pliny decided the

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his shoulders so crushingly that he was in dire distress. He feared that he was about to founder, but at least he reached the other bank."]

Passing this test of faith, the saint then proceeds to be blessed with speech in Samos and soon thereafter receives his martyrdom at the hands of Dagnus. The Latin text is from Jacobi A. Voragine, *Legenda Aurea: Vulga Historia Lombardica Dicta*, 3rd ed., ed. Th. Graesse (Breslau: Koebner, 1890), 432. The translation is by William Granger Ryan in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* Vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 12.

[36] For a summary of the transmission from the Greek ethnographers to Augustine and Isidore, see White, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, 47-67.

[37] *Naturalis historia*, VII.ii.23.

[38] As White notes, however, the cynocephali were at times placed in India and at other times Ethiopia due to the conflation of the two places. "Pliny," White writes, "was the mostly widely cited by his successors when they followed him in fusing together the African and Asian continents into a single land mass known as either Ethiopia or India. So it was possible for Pliny to equate the Cynocephali of India (for whom Megasthenes, following Ctesias, was the source) with those of Africa, who had previously been mentioned by Herodotus" (*Myths of the Dog-Man*, 191).

dogheads were more akin to man than to animal. He saw them as possessing culture in that they chose to wear clothes, conforming to his argument earlier in the *Naturalis historia* that "*ante omnia unum animantium cunctorum alienis velat opibus*" ("Man is the only living creature whom Nature covers with materials derived from others.").[39] Isidore, though, considered them animals. It was their lack of speech that identified them as such as "*quosque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines confitetur*" ("their barking indeed reveals that they are rather beasts than humans").[40]

Isidore's source there was Augustine, but the latter's viewpoint on the status of the cynocephali was more complicated than what appears in Isidore's quote. Augustine's answer to the question of the dogheads' status relied both on genealogy but also on the most important distinction, in his view, between humans and animals:

> Sed omnia genera hominum, quae dicuntur esse, credere non est necesse. Verum quisquis upsiam nascitur homo, id est animal rationale mortale, quamlibet nostris inusitatam sensibus gerat corporis fornam seu colorem siue motum siue sonum siue qualibet ui, qualibet parte, qualibet qualitate naturam: ex illo uno protoplasto origem ducere nullus fidelium dubitauerit. Apparet tamen quid in pluribus natura obtinuerit et quid sit ipsa raritate mirabile.[41]

[39] Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, Book VII.i.2.
[40] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.15.
[41] *De civitate Dei* XVI.8.

["It is not, of course, necessary to believe in all kinds of men which are said to exist. But anyone who is born anywhere as a man (that is, as a rational and mortal animal), no matter how unusual he may be to our bodily senses in shape, color, motion, sound, or in any natural power or part or quality, derives from the original and first-created man; and no believer will doubt this. It is, however, clear what constitutes the natural norm in the majority of cases and what, in itself, is a marvelous rarity."]

The defining characteristic of man, Augustine argues, is that he is a "rational and mortal animal." If a being is rational (which no animal is) but mortal (unlike God and the angels), then the only category it fits into is "human." Augustine's final line in the passage above shows a sense of comfort about the monstrous races. Despite their bodily difference, they do not in his eyes disrupt the traditional opposition between human and animal. If these races do exist (and on this he does seem to express some skepticism), that is proof they are part of his divine plan, and no new taxonomy need to be established to locate their place in that design.

Augustine's argument that monsters and other beings with abnormal bodies were not mistakes but should be considered humans whose deviant appearance reflected the intent of God opened up the conceptual space to imagine races like the dogheads as capable of being saved.[42] Ratramnus of Corbie, writing to his associate Rimbert sometime in the middle of the ninth century, grappled with question of

[42] White writes, "Thanks to Augustine, the Cynocephali were seen to be a part of the economy of salvation, albeit a fallen or exiled part; and so it was that they became widely allegorized and moralized as a quarrelsome, morally dumb, or even demonic race that was nevertheless redeemable" (*Myths of the Dog-Man*, 30).

whether the cynocephali could and should be converted if encountered in Scandinavia, the location of Rimbert's missionary work.[43] He thought they should. The fact that dogheads wore clothes and themselves domesticated animals was proof of their rationality. Beasts could not tame other beasts, and to believe otherwise would be to call into question the difference between human and animal, which relied in part on the belief that man alone could domesticate nonhumans.

The Curious Case of Christopher in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript

If you polled Old English specialists and asked them to use one word to describe what kind of being Christopher was, the answer that would most likely come back (other than "cynocephalus," though I have my doubts) is "monster" rather than "human," "animal," or "humanimal." This is understandable to a degree. The most detailed version of the Christopher passion that survives from Anglo-Saxon England is found in Cotton Vitellius A.XV, the *Beowulf*-Manuscript, and that collection has often been portrayed (correctly, I believe) as demonstrating an interest in the monstrous. While J.R.R. Tolkien is credited as renewing critical interest in the monsters of *Beowulf*,[44] it was Kenneth Sisam who noted a fascination with nonhumans in all three texts that originally comprised Vitellius A.XV: *The Wonders of the East, The*

[43] The text of this letter is in *Epistolae variorum*, 12, ed. Ernst Dummler, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*: *Epistolae,* Vol. 6 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925), 155-57. For other readings of Ratramnus' letter, see Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural In the Middle Ages: The Wiles Lecture Given At the Queen's University of Belfast 2006* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97-100 and Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 146-50.
[44] See J.R.R. Tolkien, "*Beowulf:* the Monsters and the Critics," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 22 (1936): 245-95.

Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, and *Beowulf*.[45] This focus on figures who in their difference defy cultural norms and disrupt categorization[46] was complemented by the addition of *The Passion of Saint Christopher* to the collection.[47] Sisam does not attempt to fit the other of Vitellius' texts, *Judith,* into this paradigm, speculating that its inclusion in the manuscript was "because there was no more convenient place for it, or because Judith was felt to be, like Beowulf, a saviour of her country, at a time when England needed such inspiration in the struggle with the Danish invaders."[48]

Subsequent studies have refined Sisam's idea of Vitellius A.XV as a monster book or have offered alternative theories as to its unifying principle.[49] The most prominent of these has been Andy Orchard's suggestion that the *Beowulf*-Manuscript shows an interest in what he calls "prodigies" (fantastic beings like Grendel, the dogheads, or the races illuminated in the *Wonders of the East*) and their interactions with figures defined by their "prodigious" pride, the possession of which can

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[45] Sisam, "The Compilation of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript," 65-96.

[46] The study of "monstrosity" as depicted in medieval thought is a sizable and growing field – some foundational studies are John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) and more recently Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" in his edited collection *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3-25. See also Cohen's *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[47] Based on their lack of *io*-spellings, Sisam argued that the *Christopher* and *Judith* were added together to an already extant grouping of *Beowulf*, *Wonders*, and the *Letter* ("Compilation of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript," 68).

[48] Sisam, "Compilation of the *Beowulf*-Manuscript," 67.

[49] Nicholas Howe believes that the manuscript is a "book of elsewhere," a collection of texts interested in faraway, exotic lands and what they could say about "here," about England. While the events in the *Christopher* take place in the eastern city of Samos, the text's focus on the conversion of an entire people and on the transformation of Dagnus "can serve to identify certain necessary principles of belief and power across Christendom" (*Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], 179). I share Howe's view that the text is interested in the proper expression of sovereignty, but was it a comment on the Anglo-Saxon leadership at the time the manuscript was produced in the late tenth or early eleventh century? Kathryn Powell thinks so and sees the creation of the manuscript as a response to the trauma inducted by Viking attacks during the reign of Æthelræd. In her view, Vitellius A.XV contains texts that "have the potential to communicate lessons about right rulership to Anglo-Saxon readers of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries…or the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of various strategies for dealing with foreign threats" ("Meditating on Men and Monsters: A Reconsideration of the Thematic Unity of the *Beowulf* Manuscript," *RES* 57 [2006]: 15).

transform the human into something approaching the "monster."[50] Orchard's argument solves one of the problems Sisam did not solve: By suggesting that Holofernes can be considered "monstrous" thanks to his drunken, licentious behavior, he aligns *Judith* with the other works in the manuscript. Even Beowulf himself can be considered one of these prodigies thanks to his inhuman strength and eagerness for worldly fame, a desire that ultimately damns the Geats after Beowulf's death.[51] *Christopher*, in this scheme, inverts expectations, as the true monster in the narrative is not the doghead with his hybrid body but the arrogant heathen king Dagnus.[52] In the depictions of Holofernes and Dagnus, however, the human-animal distinction comes into play. Holofernes is labeled a "*hæðen hund*" ("heathen hound")[53] and Dagnus, at his lowest point, loses his upright human posture.[54] Imagining a sovereign as akin to a beast, as we have seen, was an old and familiar move for Christian thinkers; imagining a future saint as a beast, though, was not. Yet when we consider the widely divergent beliefs about dogs that were available to the Anglo-Saxons, as well as the physical evidence for the possession and treatment of dogs in the Anglo-Saxon period, the idea of a being like Christopher being popular in early medieval England suddenly begins to make a great deal of sense.

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[50] Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the* Beowulf-*Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
[51] Ibid., 53-57.
[52] Ibid., 12-18.
[53] *Judith* ln. 110a.
[54] See below, 224-26.

A Brief History of Canines in Anglo-Saxon England

The feminist philosopher Donna Haraway has referred to dogs as part of the "queer family of companion species," as beings that live in close proximity to humans yet remain in many ways outside of our understanding.[55] They possess an "obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings," an association that "is full of waste, cruelty, indifference, ignorance, and loss as well as of joy, invention, labor, intelligence, and play."[56] Many cherish dogs as pets, and the animals are often celebrated for their beauty and heroism in both fictional and real-life accounts. At the same time, the abuse of dogs is common, and we commit acts of violence against them in our everyday speech. We refer to the most miserable time of summer as the "dog days" and characterize someone's poor performance at a job as placing him or her "in the doghouse," set apart from human peers.[57]

It is unclear when *canis familiaris*, the dog, first emerged as a separate species from *canis lupus*, the wolf. The oldest dog skeleton we can identify with some confidence dates to about 15,000 years ago. Whether human or animal had the greater agency in initiating domestication is an enduring controversy in the scientific community. One theory has been that the first dogs were descendants of wolves who

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[55] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 11.
[56] Ibid., 11-12.
[57] *Oxford English Dictionary Online* s.v. "dog days" 1a and s.v. "doghouse." As the *OED Online* notes of the former, "The name arose from the pernicious qualities of the season being attributed to the 'influence' of the Dog Star; but it has long been popularly associated with the belief that at this season dogs are most liable to go mad." See also White, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, 13.

relied on rubbish piles from human settlements as a food source.[58] As these wolves became more accustomed to man, they were easily captured and trained, eventually turning into the loyal companions we are familiar with today. Differences in behavior and morphology between the dog and the wolf have questioned this argument, however, and the origins of *canis familiaris* might not be conclusively determined for some time.[59] At stake in these debates, Haraway writes, is "1) the relation between what counts as nature and what counts as culture in Western discourse and its cousins, and 2) the correlated issue of who and what counts as an actor."[60] If humans captured these "debased wolves" and tamed them, dogs become a living example of human control over nature. If dogs were a distinct species before they encountered humans and created in themselves the characteristics that would result in a successful partnership with humans, then this narrative, and the human-animal distinction, is questioned.

Dogs collaborated with Anglo-Saxons in ways they still do with humans today, and we can gather such information on the everyday lives of dogs from archaeological data and laws. They were hunters, ratters, protectors of their owners and livestock, and likely companions. Outside of the special deposits, dog skeletons are commonly found in rubbish pits at Anglo-Saxon settlements, the animals placed there upon their

[58] For a summary of this theory as well as an argument that "proto-dogs" separated from wolves 135,000 years ago, see Stephen Budiansky, *The Truth About Dogs: An Inquiry into the Ancestery, Social Conventions, Mental Habits, and Moral Fiber of Canis Familaris* (New York: Viking, 2000), 18-29.
[59] See McHugh, *Dog*, 20-25.
[60] Haraway*, Companion Species Manifesto,* 27.

deaths.[61] How they were treated while alive seems to vary. In her study on dogs found at sites in East Anglia, Pam J. Crabtree compares remains from the Early Saxon period to the Middle and Late Saxon periods.[62] Dogs from the early period found in SFB 16 at West Stow showed signs of tibia and skull fractures and died at less than eighteen months, which suggests they were more working animals than pets whose health was prioritized.[63] On the other hand, those dog skeletons at Brandon, a Middle Saxon estate, did not have such fractures and were larger in size than the West Stow animals.[64] Finally, remains from the Early Late Saxon town of Ipswich showed a greater variation in size than those from the earlier periods. Larger remains may be those of guard or hunting dogs, but a number of smaller skeletons may be that of animals bred for ratting or even companionship, a development Crabtree links with the "rebirth of urbanism in the Late Saxon period."[65] While Anglo-Saxons of all social levels and in the clergy kept dogs, those canines best suited for hunting were possessed increasingly by elites. Some nobles were passionate about the training of dogs, as we see in Asser's anecdote of Alfred showing his retainers how to properly

[61] Juliet Clutton-Brock, "The Animal Resources," in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. David M. Wilson (London: Methuen, 1976), 385.
[62] Pam J. Crabtree, "A Note on the Role of Dogs in Anglo-Saxon Society: Evidence from East Anglia," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 25 (2015): 976-80.
[63] Ibid., 977. Noël Adams, though, has argued for a reinterpretation of the famed Sutton Hoo purse lid that may show an appreciation for dogs in the early Anglo-Saxon period. While the animals on the lid have traditionally been interpreted as wolves, Adams believes their iconography fits dogs closer. "The hounds are upright and neither fierce, nor subjugated," Adams writes, "and the man on the purse lid is not killing the canines, but rather resting his hands on his companions' paws, signaling not destruction but harmony" ("Between Myth and Reality: Hunter and Prey in Early Anglo-Saxon Art" in *Representing Beasts*, 46).
[64] Ibid., 978.
[65] Ibid., 979.

work with the animals.[66] The ownership of dogs best suited for hunting may have even been restricted in late Anglo-Saxon England in order to strengthen the association between elite hunting dogs and the nobility. While we know the *Constitutiones de foresta* date to the late twelfth century rather than the reign of Cnut in the early eleventh century, the dictate that only nobles could own greyhounds may be one of the codes that reflect older traditions.[67]

We also know that dogs attacked humans frequently enough to require legislation, including those laws found in Alfred's *Domboc*. When a dog "*toslite oððe abite*" ("tears or bites") someone, the owner was responsible for paying six, twelve, and thirty shillings on the first, second, and third offensives, respectively. This law reflected the belief that animals lacked agency as the penalties assumed the owner had properly fed the dog ("*gif he him mete selle*," "if he gives him meat").[68] The law code views a dog attack on men as the resort of a hungry animal (and dogs were thought to be both always hungry and even desirous of human flesh, as we will see shortly), and the bite of an unfed dog resulted in a greater offense due to the perceived neglect. Eventually, further "*misdæda*" ("misdeeds") by the dog would result in a full wergild paid by the owner for whatever offense the animal had committed.[69]

What dogs ate can also tell us about their relationship to humans. Naomi Sykes

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[66] *Vita Alfredi*, ch. 76.
[67] Judith A. Green, "Forest Laws in England and Normandy in the Twelfth Century," *Historical Research* 86, no. 233 (2013): 429.
[68] Alfred ch. 23. The text and numbering of laws are from F. Lieberman, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle, 1903-1906).
[69] Alfred ch. 23, 2.

has recently analyzed the bone chemistry of dogs and the humans who lived near them in Anglo-Saxon England, which can tell us to what extent they shared a diet. She theorizes that a "greater similarity in diet" represents a "more intimate, commensal relationship."[70] What that data shows is a much more separate relation than that found in Roman Britain or in the late medieval England.[71] In addition, the number of dog burials drops precipitously from the Early Anglo-Saxon period to the Late.[72] Taken together, Sykes argues, "it seems probably that the trends can be related to the arrival of Christianity and the rise of a worldview that placed humans firmly above animals, stressing separation between the two."[73]

As I mentioned earlier, the relation between humans and dogs expressed by the Bible was, to say the least, complicated. The Old Testament regarded canines as unclean animals with no discernment behind what they are, as creatures who consumed meat and blood together, a practice forbidden to men in the dietary laws, and possessed a taste for human flesh. They were the animals who ate the dead Jezebel after she had been thrown from a window and trampled by horses.[74] The dog, though it lived close to man, had a capacity for violence like a wild beast. This is why the Psalmist, in 21.21, prays for protection against both human and canine, when he says, "*Erue a framea, Deus, animam meam, et de manu canis unicam meam*" ("Deliver, O

[70] Sykes, *Beastly Questions*, 141.
[71] Ibid., 142 (Fig. 7.2).
[72] Ibid., 143 (Fig. 7.3).
[73] Ibid., 144.
[74] 2 Kings 9.33-35.

God, my soul from the sword: my only one from the paw of the dog"). Dogs were also thought lazy, and Isaiah warns the *pastores* of Israel to avoid the kind of foolish and slack lifestyle dogs were thought to lead.[75]

The New Testament treatment of dogs mostly aligns with that of the Old Testament. For example, Proverbs 26.11 was a well-known simile that compared dogs to the least intelligent of humans, stating, "*Sicut canis qui revertitur ad vomitum suum, sic inprudens qui iterat stultitiam suam*" ("As a dog that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that repeateth his folly"), and this image would be applied in 2 Peter 2.22 to *"pseudoprophetae*" ("false prophets").[76] Matthew 7.6 has Christ, during the Sermon on the Mount, instruct his followers not to give anything that is holy to dogs. For my

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[75] Isaiah 56.9-11. The passage reads,

> Omnes bestiae agri, venite ad devorandum, universae bestiae saltus. Speculatores eius caeci omnes; nescierunt universi, canes muti non valentes latrare, videntes vana, dormientes et amantes somnia. Et canes inpudentissimi: nescierunt saturitatem. Ipsi pastores ignoraverunt intellegentiam; omnes in viam suam declinaverunt, unusquisque ad avaritiam suam, a summo usque ad novissimum.

["All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, all ye beasts of the forest. His watchmen are all blind; they are all ignorant, dumb dogs not able to bark, seeing vain things, sleeping and loving dreams. And most impudent dogs: they never had enough. The shepherds themselves knew no understanding; all have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gain, from the first even to the last."]

In the passage, foreign invaders, imagined as beasts, emerge from the field (*ager*) and forest or mountain pasture (*saltus*) to destroy the people of Israel. This passage displays the same rhetorical strategy we have seen used in Gildas to depict the Anglo-Saxons as a bestial force wanting to consume Britain and employed later by the Anglo-Saxon themselves to portray the Vikings as ravenous wolves (see above 4-6 and 146-52 for my reading of Gildas and wolfish Danes, respectively). The greater menace, however, is always internal weakness rather than any animal outside, which works to maintain human superiority despite the appearance of subhumans having agency. Here, the people of Israel have fallen morally to the point they are starting to lose their humanity and are more like "*canes multi non valentes latrare* ("dumb dogs not able to bark"). Were they to have stayed alert like good dogs, they would have nothing to fear from their foes. This image will later be used by Wulfstan in his admonishments to priests derived from the words of Ezekiel (Bethurum XVIa and XVIb). For a reading of these homilies, see Jonathan Wilcox, "The Wolf on Shepherds: Wulfstan, Bishops, and the Context of the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*" in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: Garland, 2000), 395-418.

[76] Writing about these *pseudoprophetae*, Peter notes, "*Contigit enim eis illud veri proverbii: 'Canis reversus ad suum vomitum,' et, 'Sus lota in volutabro luti'*" ("For, that of the true proverb has happened to them: 'The dog is returned to his vomit,' and 'The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire').

reading of Christopher, however, there are two canine-related stories in the New Testament that are the most important. The first is in Matthew 15.26-27 where a Canaanite woman asks Christ to heal her demon-possessed daughter. Christ responds that "*Non est bonum sumere panem filiorum et mittere canibus*" ("It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs"), rejecting her request because her Gentile status seemingly makes her like a lowly animal and unworthy of his attention. But the Canaanite woman convinces Christ to help her by answering that "*Etiam, Domine, nam et catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum*" ("Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."). By acknowledging her subhuman, sinful status as a *catellus* ("whelp"), a being beneath the purity of Christ, the Canaanite woman proves that she possesses a self-understanding that no actual dog (or sinner who acts like one) could have and is thus really no animal at all.[77] The true beasts and bestial sinners, lacking such a perspective on the self, would be barred from community with Christ.[78]

Augustine reads this story as about transformation, changing from an animal state to a human one. When the Canaanite woman recognizes what side of this distinction she falls on, her humility allows her to make the change. The beings who

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[77] Giorgio Agamben argued that humanity historically defines itself as "the being which recognizes itself as such, that *man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human*" (*The Open,* 26). In the early medieval period, this would have entailed an awareness of one's own sinful nature as a human as the Canaanite woman displays.

[78] Revelation 22.14-15. It reads, "*Beati qui lavant stolas suas*, *ut sit potestas eorum in ligno vitae et portis intrent in civitatem. Foris canes et venefici et impudici et homicidae et idolis servientes et omnis qui amat et facit mendacium*" ("Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are dogs and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers, and servers of idols and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.").

will remain canines, Augustine says, "*sunt calumniosi latrantes*" ("are the cynics and twisters and fault-finders").[79] Ælfric offers his own reading of the story in his homily for the second Sunday in Lent, writing that "*þæt Israhela folc wæs geo getteald to Godes bearnum, and hæðen folc geond ealle woruld to hundum, for heora fulum ðeawum*" ("the people of Israel was before numbered as the children of God, and heathen folk throughout all the world as hounds for their foul customs").[80] He uses the story as a prefiguring of the progression of history that saw Christians gain the title of "chosen people" that the Jews once held. The perceived betrayal of Christ by the Jews meant that "*Nu is seo endebyrdnys þæra namena awend mid þam geleafan. Hi sind gehatene hundas, and we scep*" ("Now the grouping of those names is changed with the belief. They are called hounds, and we sheep"). Later in the same homily, he extends his metaphor to make a point about how Jews fail to understand the "*gastlice andgit þæra boca*" ("the spiritual sense of the books," the "*boca*" referring to the gospels). They are the dogs that eat the "rind" of the bread Christ describes, while humble Christians properly eat the crumbs, recognizing and thereby banishing their animality. This sort of religious positioning via imagining the self as "aware" animal and others as "unaware" animals will be present in the Christopher text, as we will soon see.

The other biblical story could be interpreted as depicting dogs in a positive light, and in this, we may locate a belief that explains why a doghead could become a

[79] Augustine, *Sermo* 60a [CPL 0284]. The translation is from *Sermons (51-94), on the Old Testament*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 141.
[80] The text of the homily is from *Aelfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, ed. Malcom Godden (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 70.

saint. In Luke 16.19-22, Christ tells the following parable:

> Homo quidam erat dives, et induebatur purpura et bysso et epulabatur cotidie splendide. Et erat quidam mendicus nomine Lazarus qui iacebat ad ianuam eius ulceribus plenus, cupiens saturari de micis, quae cadebant de mensa divitis, sed et canes veniebant et lingebant ulcera eius. Factum est autem ut moreretur mendicus et portaretur ab angelis in sinum Abrahae. Mortuus est autem et dives, et sepultus est in inferno.

["There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus who lay at his gate full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell."]

To Ælfric, the fact the dogs licked Lazarus' wounds was no insignificant detail, and he matter-of-factly notes in his explication how "*Hundes liccung gehælð wunda*" ("The licking of hounds heal wounds").[81] He offers no explanation as to why this is the case, presumably because the biblical authority behind the belief made it unquestionably true. However, his source here, Gregory the Great, provided some reasoning, noting, "At contra jacentis pauperis vulnera lingebant canes *Nonnunquam solent in sacro eloquio per canes praedicatores intelligi. Canum etenim lingua vulnus dum lingit, curat, quia et doctores*

[81] ÆCHom I.23 ("Second Sunday after Pentecost"), in *Ælfric's Catholic Homiles: The First Series*, 367.

sancti dum in confessione peccati nostri nos instruunt, quasi vulnus mentis per linguam tangunt" ("Moreover dogs licked the poor man's wounds as he lay there. Sometimes in Scripture dogs represent preachers. When a dog licks a wound with its tongue it heals it. When holy teachers give us instruction during the confession of our sins it is as if they are touching the wounds of our hearts with their tongues.")[82] The dog, then, was among the foulest of creatures, like the fool who returned to his folly repeatedly, a violent, gluttonous beast analogized to those incapable or recognizing the Savior. They were the false prophets of 2 Peter 2, spouting falsities, but they were also true preachers. In the natural histories of Pliny and Isidore, dogs were not aggressive animals but instead dedicated companions and among the most intelligent of animals.[83] These are all qualities that will appear throughout the legends surrounding the life and death of Christopher. Such ambivalence about the dog was reflected in the ambivalence about the status of the doghead, and these disagreements are reflected in the divergent narratives of the Christopher *passio*, which differently depict

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[82] Gregory the Great, *Homitiae xl in Evangelia* 40.2 [CPL 1711]. The translation is from *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurt (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication, 1990), 372. This reading is also quoted nearly verbatim by Bede in his *In Lucae*, V.16 [CPL 1356].

[83] Pliny recounts anecdotes where dogs solved the murders of their human owners, helped an exiled king regain his throne after a coup, and cast themselves into the funerary pyres of their masters. Regarding their intellect, "Soli dominum novere et ignotum quoque, si repente veniat, intellegunt; soli nomina sua, soli vocem domesticam agnoscunt. Itinera quamvis longa meminere, nec ulli praeter hominem memoria maior. Impetus eorum et saevitia mitigatur ab homine considente humi" ("Only dogs know their master and recognize a stranger if he arrives unexpectedly. They alone recognize their own names and the voice of members of the family. Dogs remember the way to places, however far away, and no animal has a better memory, except man"; *Naturalis historia*, VIII.lx.142-44). Isidore noted that dogs are named after the sound of their barking ("*canor*"), and he tells us that "*Nihil autem sagacius canibus; plus enim sensus ceteris animalibus habent*" ("No animal is smarter than the dog, for they have more sense than the others"). He then goes into a list of examples, derived from Pliny, that display a dog's loyalty to the master: "*Namque soli sua nomina recognoscunt; dominos suos diligunt; dominorum tecta defendunt; pro dominis suis se morti obiciunt; voluntarie cum domino ad praedam currunt; corpus domini sui etiam mortuum non relinquunt. Quorum postremo naturae est extra homines esse non posse*" ("They alone recognize their own names; they love their masters; they defend their master's home; they lay down their life for their master; they willingly run after game with their master; they do not leave the body of their master even when he has died. Finally, it is part of their nature not to be able to live apart from humans"; *Etymologiae*, XII.ii.25-26).

the agency behind the saint's transformation from unbeliever to Christian: Was he a dumb animal moved by God or a frustrated human being looking to convert but not having access to the means required?

The Christopher Legend in Anglo-Saxon England

We are not quite sure how stories of the dogheaded saint came to Anglo-Saxon England. Given the Christopher *passio*'s origins in Eastern Christendom, it is tempting to speculate that Theodore of Tarsus brought the *passio* with him when he became archbishop of Canterbury in 669.[84] Theodore had been educated in cities like Antioch and Constantinople,[85] the same regions where the cult of Christopher initially thrived.[86] Alternatively, it is possible that Irish missionaries introduced the Christopher legend to the Anglo-Saxons sometime in the seventh or early eighth century. Cynocephali were popular among the Irish, whose mythic heroes routinely battled the dogheads and whose real-life clergy enjoyed reading such tales.[87]

The earliest life of Christopher in Anglo-Saxon England we can date with certainty is from the *Old English Martyrology*.[88] But if that ninth-century vernacular text derived from a Latin compilation by Bishop Acca of Hexham sometime between 731-740, as Michael Lapidge argues, then stories of the doghead could have been

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[84] I make the same argument in Chapter 1 regarding the *Old English Physiologus*. See above, 53.
[85] Michael Lapidge, "Theodore," in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 461.
[86] The earliest church we know was dedicated to Christopher was in Bithynia, a province near to Constantinople. For a discussion on the Christopher cult's rise in Eastern Christendom, see White, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, 34-36.
[87] Orchard provides a brief summary of cynocephali in medieval Irish texts in *Pride and Prodigies*, 15-17. A more comprehensive study of the dogheads in Irish legend is that of Phillip A. Bernhardt-House, *Werewolves, Magical Hounds, and Dog-Headed Men in Celtic Literature: A Typological Study of Shape-Shifting* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 257-325.
[88] *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Christine Rauer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 1-4.

circulating around the same time the final special deposits of dogs were being buried, suggesting continuity between the pre-Christian belief in the sacrificial power of the dog and the emergence of this new dogheaded saint.[89] This version of the Christopher *passio* most closely matches 1764 in the BHL, but there is also proof that the BHL 1766 narrative, from which Vitellius A.XV may be descended, was known that early. Intriguingly, our evidence for that comes not from the island but from Bavaria. There, a manuscript with BHL 1766 was produced in the last quarter of the eighth century in a scriptorium "where Anglo-Saxon influence was still alive…to judge by the script, textual tradition, and the German glosses."[90] Given the tradition's emphasis on the power of recent converts to bring others into the Christian fold, one can speculate that Anglo-Saxon missionaries imagined themselves as being like Christopher, once-subhuman creatures newly brought to the faith and eager to convert the people of a nearby heathen land, even willing to sacrifice their lives to do so (as their countryman St. Boniface had, killed in 754 by Frisians he sought to bring into the faith). Alternatively, they might have believed that if a being like Christopher could be redeemed, then the unruly Germanic tribesmen could as well.[91]

While, as I mentioned earlier, Fulk notes that liturgical evidence shows

[89] For Lapidge's argument that the *Old English Martyrology* came from an earlier compilation by Acca, see "Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the *Old English Martyrology*," *Analecta Bollandiana* 123 (2005): 29-78.
[90] Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 162.
[91] Steel makes this point when he writes of the Christopher legend, "Such images and stories materialize a double lesson: God's dominion extends to the furthest reaches of the world, and if God can reach monstrous people, then nearer humans whose ensouled status or aptness for missionary efforts may have been in doubt become far more assuredly human" (*How to Make a Human*, 144).

Christopher became a popular saint only late in the Anglo-Saxon period,[92] the Acca martyrology and Bavarian text indicate the Anglo-Saxons were possibly familiar with the legend much earlier and proliferated it. In addition to these versions of the *passio*, an incipit survives from London BL Cotton Otho B.X, which was destroyed in the 1731 fire at Ashburnham House and thus missing its body. If it were not for Humphrey Wanley, who recorded the incipit before the manuscript burned, this text would be unknown to us. There was also a Latin version of the *passio* produced in Anglo-Saxon England that dates to approximately 900.[93] Part of a manuscript that also contains narratives of the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross as well as the passions of Margaret and Juliana, it shows that the Anglo-Saxons were knowledgeable of yet another Christopher text, BHL 1769.[94]

All of these versions center on the confrontation between Christopher and the pagan king Dagnus. *The Passion of Saint Christopher*, unlike the other texts in Vitellius A.XV, features nonhumans ascending from their irrationality, in the case of both the dogheaded saint and the bestial Dagnus.[95] The juxtaposition of these two figures structures the narrative, which uses ideas about animality not only to understand the

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[92] Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, x.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Gneuss No. 885.5. The manuscript is Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale lat. 5574.
[95] Despite this uniqueness, several commentators on the work have felt the need to begin their discussion by dismissing the "literariness" of the work. Joyce Tally Lionarons, for instance, laments that the Christopher *passio* is not "outstanding in sheer literary value" ("From Monster to Martyr: The Old English Legend of Saint Christopher*,"* in *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger, Studies in Medieval Culture 42 [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002] 167-82; at 168). Jill Frederick, similarly, warns that the Christopher text "should not be allotted greater critical praise than it merits" ("*His Ansyn Wæs Swylce Rosan Blostma*: A Reading of the Old English *Life of St. Christopher*," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 12-13 [1989 for 1987-88]: 137-48; at 137).

change in Christopher but also to mark on Dagnus' body the abuses of sovereign power the king commits. As we have seen, the ruler needed to be among the most rational of earthly figures to lead his people, the most capable of controlling animals and, in partnership with the church, controlling the animal urges of his subjects. This is why the texts often mention Dagnus' obsession with the control he holds over his people and has the saint constantly needle the king that his powerbase is weak because of his disbelief. Christopher's journey from beast to saint thus mirrors Dagnus' move from bestial to proper sovereign. This reminder that the foulest of creatures, if they chose to believe, were redeemed could be taken by Anglo-Saxons encountering the *passio* to recognize and banish their own animality like the Canaanite woman. If, as Wulfstan alleged in the *Sermo Lupi*, many Anglo-Saxons were acting like dogs who have no concern for filth, then Christopher provided a striking example of what could happen when the most abject of sinners did in fact care about their filth.[96]

The extant versions of the Christopher legend disagree as to how the saint comes to be converted, and we will begin by looking at the apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Bartholomew, from which, according to White, the Christopher narratives ultimately descend.[97] On their missionary travels, the two apostles encounter a being named "Abominable" with the head of a dog. This story portrays the doghead as ignorant about the existence of God, and it is only after he is

[96] See above, 6-7.
[97] White, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, 22-46.

threatened with being burnt alive that he agrees to accept the faith.[98] The apostles then take the new convert, redubbed "Christian," into the city of Bartos, which they wish to convert. When the inhabitants resist the new religion and threaten the apostles with death by wild beasts, Christian asks God to restore his old bestial fury. After God grants this wish, Christian destroys the animals and consumes them, also killing over seven hundred cityfolk in the process. God then sends a fire to surround the city, and the inhabitants fearfully agree to convert, begging the Lord "'to save us from this death and from the double affliction of the fire and of him whose face is like unto that of a dog.'"[99] At this point, the doghead is redomesticated, his manner made "as gentle as a lamb," and he remains for the rest of the tale in his human state, even asking God to resurrect those humans he had slain.[100] While he has the power of language like a human, Christian has little freedom in what he does, and in many ways he is an ideal guard dog, willing "to hear (*or* obey) every command" that Andrew and Bartholomew give him.[101]

BHL 1766 follows the apocryphal acts in depicting Christopher's conversion as a miracle initiated by God, as we see in the opening of the Latin:

> In tempore illo, regnante Dagno in civitate Samo, homo venit de insula, genere Canineorum, et ostensum est ei a Domino, ut baptizaretur

[98] The following summary is based off the translation of the Ethiopic *Contendings of the Apostles* in *The Contendings of the Apostles*, trans. E.A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), 203-13.
[99] Ibid., 211.
[100] Ibid., 212.
[101] Ibid., 208.

baptismo sancto; quem ostendit Dominus Jesus Christus in seculo suo: et ostensum est ei, quoniam multæ generationes per te credere habent, in Dominum Jesum Christum; et vocabuntur filii Dei vivi.[102]

[At that time, when Dagnus ruled in the city of Samos, a man came from the island, by origin from the race of the dog-headed people, and was instructed by the Lord to receive the holy baptism which the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in his age, and it was revealed to him that many generations were going to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be called sons of the Living God through him.]

Because the opening of Vitellius A.XV is lost, we can compare the Latin to the Otho B.X. incipit recorded by Wanley before the Ashburnham fire:

Menn þa leofstan, on þære tide was geworden, þe Dagnus se cync rixode on Samon þære ceastre, þæt sum man com on þa ceastre se wæs healf-hundisces manncynnes. Ac he ne cuðe nan þingc to þam lyfiendan Gode, ne his naman ne cigde, þe wæs him ætywed fram urum drihtne, þæt he sceoldon fulluhte onfon.[103]

["Dearest people, it happened in the time that Dagnus the king ruled in the city of Samos that a certain man came to the city who was of the half-hound race. But he did not know anything about the living God, nor invoked God's name, until it was revealed to him by our Lord that he should receive baptism."]

[102] The *Acta Sanctorum* text is *AASS* Iul. VI (1868), 146-49. The translation is by David Woods, "The Passion of St. Christopher (*BHL* 1766)," http://www.ucc.ie/archive/milmart/BHL1766.html (accessed 08/20/16).
[103] The text is conveniently reprinted in Pulsiano, "The Passion of Saint Christopher." The translation of the Otho incipit is mine though I have consulted that by Fulk, *The Beowulf Manuscript*, 346.

Both versions identify Christopher as a man ("*homo*" and "*man*" in the Latin and Old English, respectively) but also as a member of another race of beings, of *"genere Canineorum*" ("race of the dog-headed people"), which is rendered "*healf-hundisc manncynn*" ("half-hound race") in the Old English. The most important similarity, however, is how Christopher comes to make his transformation from unbeliever to holy figure. The apocryphal acts and BHL 1766 both have him instructed by God to take up Christianity, and it is mentioned in the Old English that like a beast "*he ne cuðe nan þingc to þam lyfiendan Gode*" ("he did not know anything about the living God") and thus was unable to change on his own. As we have seen, one of the ways the possession of rationality was demonstrated was through a belief in the existence of God and an acceptance of Christ as the savior. Christopher thus appears more bestial here than he does in other forms of the legend, a portrayal that privileges the human through the "domestication" of the beast and emphasizes the mercy of the Lord rather than any agency of Christopher himself.

In comparing this version of events with that found in the *Old English Martyrology*, we see the process of Christopher's conversion differs in the latter:

> Se com on Decies dagum þæs caseres on þa ceastre þe Samo is nemned, of þære þeode þær men habbað hunda heofod ond of þære eorðan on þære æton men hi selfe. He hæfde hundes heafod, on his loccas wæron ofer gemet side, ond his eagan scinon swa leohte swa morgensteorra, ond his teð wæron swa scearpe swa eofores tuxas. He was Gode

geleaffull on his heortan, ac he ne mihte sprecan swa mon.[104]

["He came in the days of Emperor Decius into the city that is named Samos, from the nation where men have the heads of dogs and from the place where men eat themselves. He had the head of a dog, and his hair was greatly beyond measure, and his eyes shone as bright as the morning star, and his teeth were as sharp as the tusks of a boar. He was believing in God in his heart, but he could not speak as a man."]

As Orchard has noted, the *Martyrology* entry is more interested in the saint's exotic physical appearance than the Otho incipit (or at least feels the need to establish it immediately).[105] Given the compiler's need to condense the lengthier Latin *passio*, one can hypothesize that this was an attempt to achieve a greater impact on the audience given the shorter form of the narrative, to stress the animality in Christopher that must be overcome. The physical details reflect earlier sources with respect to the bodies of the cynocephali but also parallel other monstrous figures in Old English imaginative writing, including Grendel[106] and the dogheads (there called *Cocopenae*) in *The Wonders of the East*.[107] While his body is like an animal's, Christopher's eating habits too make him less than human, the horror of his cannibalism stressed by the pithy reflexive "*æton men hi selfe*" ("men eat themselves"), showing it to be a crime against

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[104] All citations of the *Martyrology* entry are from Rauer's edited text in *The Old English Martyrology*, 90.
[105] Orchard, *Pride & Prodigies*, 14.
[106] *Beowulf* 726b-727. As Grendel enters Heorot before his fateful battle with the Geatish hero, "*him of eagum stod / ligge gelicost / leoht unfæger*" ("from his eyes shone a horrible light, most like flame").
[107] The entry reads: "*Eac swylce þær beoð cende healf-hundingas þa syndon hatene* conopenas. *Hy habbaþ horses mana ond eoferes tuxas ond hunda heafdu, ond heora oroð biþ swylce fyres leg*" ("There are also born there half-hounds who are called cocopenae. They have the mane of a horse and the tusks of a boar and the heads of hounds, and their breath is like the flame of fire."). The text is from Fulk, *The Beowulf Manuscript*, 18, and the translation is my own.

one's very own nature. Despite these characteristics, however, he appeared to have gained some knowledge of Christianity and actively believes in God "*on his heortan*" ("in his heart"). The only barrier that Christopher has in preventing him from expressing his belief is the very same quality that Isidore saw as marking the dogheads as inhuman: an inability to speak.

BHL 1764 goes into more detail about Christopher's desire for salvation:

> Quidam autem vir, cum esset alienigena, regionis eorum qui homines manducabant, qui habebat terribilem visionem et quasi canino capite, in bello comprehensus est e comitibus temporibus illis et perductus est ad regem. Probavit autem illum in numero armarianorum, qui adsistebant ad manum regis. Cum autem proponeretur impiissimum edictum a judice, hic ei beatissiumus non poterat loqui nostrae linguae sermonem. Corde autem perturbabantur viscera ejus valde. Egrediens autem de palatio foris, projecit se in faciem, deprecans Dominum dari sibi loquelam per virtutem Christi.[108]

[There was a certain man who, since he was a foreigner from the land of man-eaters, had a terrible appearance, a dog's head as it were. He was captured in war by the counts at that time, and was led to the king. He posted him in the *numerus Marmaritarum* which stood at the king's hand. But when the most wicked edict was published by the governor this most blessed man was not able to speak our language.

[108] The text of BHL 1764 is from *Anal. Boll.* X 395.

However, he was greatly disturbed at heart. He went out of the palace gates, threw himself upon his face, and prayed to the Lord to give him through Christ's virtue the ability to speak (our language).][109]

Emphasis is placed on the future saint's longing to believe and frustration that his mission is held back by his lack of human speech. Christopher, understanding the exceeding generosity with which God grants mercy to his followers, prostrates himself face-down as a sign of his submission and humility, a move that will soon be contrasted with Dagnus' forced relocation to the ground. The focus on the doghead's face is also important, particularly the mouth, the part of his body that his barking emerges from and the entry point for the human flesh he eats. Both BHL 1764 and the *Martyrology* have the detail about a figure who appears next to Christopher and "*eðode him on ðone muð*" ("breathed into his mouth"), an act of cleansing that eliminates Christopher's old subjectivity as a barking and gluttonous cannibal. Any trace of his animality is sucked out as his new identity and the language used to express it forms, a mouth-to-mouth domestication of the doghead. The mouth that once consumed human flesh will soon unleash the exhortations used to convert the entirety of Dagnus' kingdom.

Christopher was not the only preaching dog in early Christianity, though, and another important one for our concerns is found in an apocryphal text known as the

[109] The translation is by David Woods, "The Passion of St. Christopher (*BHL* 1764)," http://www.ucc.ie/archive/milmart/BHL1764.html (accessed 08/21/16).

Acts of Peter[110], an episode in which sees the apostle challenging the authority of the heretical Simon Magus.[111] When Peter arrives at the door of Marcellus, with whom Simon is living, a servant tells him that Simon is unwilling to come out and face him.[112] Afraid of appearing weak before those townspeople following him to witness the confrontation, Peter grants a dog the ability to speak. The dog breaks into Marcellus' residence, and instead of just summoning Simon Magus as it was commanded, it enters into a debate of sorts with the heretic on its own, though Simon is initially rendered speechless at the appearance of this talking animal. Is it through the mouth of the dog that the message behind the miracle is explained. The dog refers to itself as normally a dumb animal, but it also points out that it is able to recognize Simon's cowardice and disbelief while the being blessed with rationality, Simon, cannot. Once this message has been delievered, however, the dog dies. While the human-animal boundary could be temporarily broken down for a miracle, a living animal who spoke would be a sign of the boundary's permeability. While to my

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[110] A copy of the *Acts of Peter* is preserved in a Latin manuscript dating to the seventh century in Vercelli, but there is no firm evidence that the episode with the dog was known to the Anglo-Saxons. For a discussion of those parts of the *Acts of Peter* that may have been available in Anglo-Saxon England, see the entries in *The Apocrypha*, ed. Frederick M. Biggs, SASLC *Instrumenta Anglistica Medievalia* 1 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 51-53.

[111] Christopher's *passio* and the *Acts of Peter* can be counted among those narratives where the holy power over animals could even overcome one difference considered proof that animals (including the cynocephali in Isidore's view) were not rational: their inability to speak. The prototype for this story in Christian belief was the narrative of Balaam's ass in Numbers 22.1-35. Balaam is asked to curse Israeli by the wicked Moabite king Balak, and while Balaam initially follows God's order to refuse the ruler, Balaam eventualy agrees to Balak's demands and sets out riding his donkey. An angel whom only the donkey can see appears and impedes their path. Balaam punishes the animal for stopping, but the donkey is given the power of speech by God and lambasts its owner, citing its years of loyal service, and God then reveals the angel to Balaam. The message is that loyalty should be reciprocated with loyalty. The donkey has faithfully served Balaam but is mistreated much in the same way that Balaam has abused the loyalty God has shown to him. Of the two, it should be the animal that is spiritually blind and unable to see the angel, but the fact Balaam cannot shows how he is, at that point, a lesser creature than the lowly ass.

[112] The summary of the *Acts of Peter* is derived from the translation in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 313-16.

knowledge there is no direct link between the *Acts of Peter* and the Christopher traditions, the human-animal interactions in the apocryphal text helps us to better understand those in the hagiography.

All versions of the legend have Christopher eventually led before the pagan king Dagnus, who fears the influence the cynocephalus will have on his people. In the 1764/*Martyrology* version, he also is desirous to see the saint's marvelous body for himself, ordering his soldiers in the Old English that "*gif he þonne nolde to him cuman, þæt hi hine ofslogon and him brohton þæt heafod to, þæt he gesege hulic þæt wære*" ("if he [Christopher] did not wish to come to him, that they should kill him and bring the head to him, so that he could see what it was like"). Christopher goes voluntarily, and the text notes of Dagnus that "*þa wundrade he swa ðæt he feoll of his ðrymsetle*" ("he was so amazed that he fell from his throne"), beginning a pattern of the king losing his upright human posture. Dagnus at this point attempts to seduce the saint to idolatry, through the promise of riches and through prostitutes, but whatever the temptation, Christopher defeats it.

It is here that the *Vitellius* passio picks up with Dagnus, who is frustrated by the saint's spiritual defenses, deciding to use the oldest trick in the persecutor's book—torture—to return Christopher to heathenism (and animality). In indulging his thirst for violence against the holy man, the king, who should be among the least animalistic of all earthly beings, becomes bestial himself, and the believing nonhuman more regal,

shown through the irony of the tortures Dagnus devises.[113] Other tortures continue this trend, with the king ordering Christopher to be tied to a throne-like bench in the middle of the city and setting a fire underneath it, intending to roast the saint like a pig.[114] Dagnus sees this violence as reaffirming his authority as king, as allowing him to hold onto control of his "*folc*" ("people"),[115] and in dealing with what he perceives as a nonhuman threat in this way, he is indeed acting as a ruler often would. His problem is that he does not see the change that has occurred in Christopher. As these tortures occur, the doghead taunts him, telling the king that "*Gyf þu hwylce maran witu be me gepoht hæbbe, hrædlice do ðu þa, forðon þine tintrego me synt swettran þonne huniges beo-bread*" ("If you have a thought of greater tortures for me, then quickly do them, because your tortures are sweeter to me than a comb of honey").[116] Behind this insult lies the idea that animals, and especially dogs, were gluttonous creatures that could only respond to bodily urges like hunger. Christopher's dialogue reveals that he has conquered this particular instinct, and his service to the Lord is what fulfills him now, a fact Dagnus fails to recognize.

If this resistance to hunger and pain cannot convince the stubborn king, then the next sign of Christopher's change, even more marked on his body, should. The

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[113] Orchard, *Pride & Prodigies*, 17.

[114] The Vitellius A.XV text reads, "*Se cyningc þa het bringan isenne scamol, se wæs emn-heah þæs mannes up-wæstme, þæt wæs twelf fæðma lang, ond he hyne het asettan on middan þa ceastre, ond þone halgan Cristoforus he het þær to gebindan, ond he het beneoðan him þæt unmætoste fyr onælan*" ("Then the king ordered an iron bench to be brought which was equally in height to the man's stature [that was twelve fathoms long], and he ordered him to be set in the middle of the city, and he ordered the holy Christopher to be bound there, and he ordered the most enormous fire to be lit beneath him"; Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, 2).

[115] Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, 4.

[116] Ibid., 2.

passage is important enough to quote in full:

> Ond mit ty þe he his cwæð, se halga on middes þæs fyres mænigo, se scamull him wæs geworden eallswa geþywed weax. Þa geseah Dagnus se cyningc þone halgan Cristoforus on middum þam fyre standende, on he geseah þæt his ansyn wæs swylce rosan blostma. Myt ty þe he þæt geseah, he wæs on micele modes wafunga, ond for þæs eges fyrhto he wæs swa abreged þæt he gefeol on eorðan ond þær læg fram þære ærestan tide þæs dæges oð ða nigoþan tide. Þa þæt geseah se halga Cristoforus, he hyne het up arisan, and myt ty þe he up aras, he him to cwæð, "Þu wyrresta wild-deor, hu lange dyrstlæcest þu þæt ðu þis folc fram me tyhtest, swa þæt him nis alyfed þæt hi minum godes onsecgen?"[117]

["And after he said this, the holy one in the middle of the multitude of flames, the bench had become for him entirely like pressed wax. Then King Dagnus saw the holy Christopher standing in the middle of the fire, and he saw that his countenance was like the blossom of a rose. When he saw that, he was greatly stirred in mind, and on account of his terror, he was so frightened that he fell on the earth and lay there from the first hour of the day until the ninth hour. When the holy Christopher saw that, he ordered him to be raised up, and once he had risen, the king said to him, 'You worst of wild beasts, how long do you dare to incite this people from me so that it is not

[117] Ibid., 4.

permitted for them to sacrifice to my gods?"']

The transformation of the bench into "*gepywed weax"* ("melted wax") is a provocative detail showing the fire's great heat and the saint's incredible resistance to its ravages. The greater change, however, is of Christopher's face into a visage "*swylce rosan blostma*" ("like the blooming of a rose"), which stresses the text's message that even the most wretched and base of beings can be modified by the immutable power of God. The association of the rose with martyrdom is common in hagiography, but what freshens it up here is its application to a nonhuman face, one of a dog, the very same animal who expelled then consumed its own vomit and ate bloody meat.[118] The change in Christopher's "*ansyn*" ("face") sends a message to Dagnus that the creature he tortures is beast no more.[119]

Dagnus' understanding of Christopher remains as "animal" at this point, though. This is clearest when at the end of the passage above he addresses Christopher as ("you worst of wild animals"), a label akin to the one ("*ferus*" or "wild, savage") the saint applies to himself at the beginning of BHL 1766 before he is changed. Dagnus' ignorance is also shown by the king's physical response to the

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[118] Frederick sees Christopher's rosy face as one part of a larger association made in the work between the saint and vegetation. She notes that the word used to describe Christopher's stature is "*up-wæstme*," a compound that includes "wæstm" or "fruit," meant to invoke the idea of the saint as blossoming. A search of the *DOE* corpus reveals that this word only appears in the Christopher *passio*. See Frederick, "*His Ansyn Swylce Rosan Blostma*," 141.

[119] One is reminded here of Emmanuel Levinas' idea of the "face" and our ethical responsibility to the Other. The "face," as Matthew Calarco notes, represents "an expressivity and vulnerability that calls my thought and egoism into question and that demands an alternative mode of relation" (*Zoographies*, 64), and an "alternative mode of relation" is precisely what Dagnus will shortly discover in regards to Christopher and his religion. While Levinas himself often seemed uncertain of whether a given animal possessed a "face," he did seem confident about the dog having one. See "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas" (conducted by Tamra Wright, Peter Hughes, Alison Ainley), trans. Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright, in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988), 169.

saint's appearance in the fire. Verticality is a prominent motif in the legend, as we saw when Dagnus fell down after observing Christopher for the first time. Here, his fall is measured against the doghead's self-prostration earlier. Christopher's humility resulted in his animality being removed, but Dagnus' collapse, a forced humbling of sorts, is meant to show him his bestial nature. Humans were defined in classical and exegetical thought by how their bodies stood as they moved. Ælfric, in his homily on the Nativity, discusses how God has created many diverse forms of life, and

> Sume gað on twam fotum, sume on feower fotum. Sume fleoð mid fyðerum, sume on flodum swimmað and hi ealle swaþeah alotene beoð to þære eorðan weard and þider wilniað oððe þæs þe him lyst oððe þæs þe hi beþurfon; ac se man ana gæð uprihte, þæt getacnað þæt he sceall ma þæncan upp þonne nyðer þe læs þe þæt mod sy neoðer; þonne se lichoma and he sceal smeagen embe þæt æce life þe he to gesceapen wæs swiðor þonne embe þa eorðlican þing.

["Some go on two feet, some on four feet, some fly with wings, some swim in the waters, and yet all these are bowed down earthward, and thither is their desire, either because it pleaseth them or because they needs must; but man alone goeth upright, which signifieth that his thoughts should be more upward than downward, lest the mind be lower than the body; and that he ought to seek after the eternal life for which

he was created rather than after earthly things."][120]

In being on the ground, Dagnus inhabits a space more appropriate for him and his animalistic desires. As we saw in the last chapter, a king should be elevated physically, whether on a throne atop a dais or on a war horse above his retainers, to reflect his elevated station on earth. His thoughts too should rise, should look toward heaven. Dagnus, a poor sovereign, can only think terrestrially; his mind is on his earthly power, which pales in comparison to the heavenly might of Christopher. The saint, no longer a beast, can stand even in the flames.

It is at this point that Christopher is bound to a post and shot at with arrows, a torture derived from the passion of Sebastian. None of the arrows hurt Christopher, but Dagnus is blinded by two of the shafts that change course and pierce his eyes. Christopher is then beheaded, and the desperate, blind Dagnus shortly thereafter gains the self-awareness that the Canaanite woman possessed. When he recognizes that he lives in an irrational, bestial state, Dagnus is able to cure his spiritual and bodily infirmity, the latter by mixing the saint's blood with the earth Christopher was martyred on and applying the salve to his eyes.[121] No one is more zealous than a new convert, so the saying goes, and Dagnus does his best to prove that true, threatening death to anyone who performs any act against "*þæs heofonlican Godes willan þe Cristoforus*

[120] The text (ÆLS I) and translation are from *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. and trans. Walter W. Skeat, EETS 76 (London: EETS, 1881), 14-15. See also Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 44-60.
[121] Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, 10

beeode" ("the will of the heavenly God who Christopher followed").[122]

Miraculous transformations occur with some frequency in saints' lives. The most unbelieving, bloodthirsty heathen oppressors routinely become some of the strongest proponents of the faith, as indeed Dagnus does in the Christopher *passio*. But they are almost always human beings struggling with an unnatural, irrational disbelief. Christopher is the rare transformed nonhuman, a saint with an imperfect body, and this is one reason why his life was so powerful for the Anglo-Saxons. He reminded them of the dogs that played such an important role in human society, showing their masters affection, protecting their lives and livestock from the ravages of fire and predation, and serving as companions on the hunt. These abilities in Christopher also would resonate with a popular religious culture that had once (and perhaps continued) to see animal bodies as capable of protecting humans, as we saw with the buried dog limbs at Sutton Courtenay and Mucking. I suspect, though, that Christopher's central importance was to remind the Anglo-Saxons of their own beings, their own sinful natures in need of assistance and deliverance from God. Their imaginations could see them living through another body: that of a being part-dog. In the political and social climate at the beginning of the eleventh century in which *The Passion of Saint Christopher* was written down in Vitellius A.XV, it must have been a comfort to know that a human spiritually as low as a beast could have his or her animality eliminated and be brought into the community of believers. Their sinfulness

[122] Ibid.

had, as Wulfstan so eagerly pointed out, brought the violence of the Vikings who afflicted them, and to banish it would save the Anglo-Saxon people. That a saint who blended man and animal, like so many of the traditional Anglo-Saxon heroes, could represent this was only the better.

CONCLUSION

NEVER MODERN, BUT ALWAYS POSTHUMAN?

We have never been modern,[1] but have we always been posthuman?[2] My reading of the human-animal relationship in Anglo-Saxon England offers further support for the answer being "yes." Anglo-Saxon culture did not depict most human subjects as transcendent and autonomous. Instead, it understood them through their relation to nonhumans whether animals, objects, or the environment. One need only look to the burials at Sutton Hoo or at the ship the earl Godwine gifted to Edward the Confessor, assemblages roughly 400 years apart and that nearly bookend the period, to see this was the case. In a burial, the final image of the deceased was constructed by a network of objects and animals (even entire horses) interred alongside the body. The ship given to Edward, adorned with a likeness of a predatory bird grasping a warrior in its talons, defined him as a king who would pursue his enemies with a raptorial speed and determination both on land and on the waves.[3]

At the same time, we must always remember that thought we label "posthuman" (always a fraught term) can have different conclusions about what the

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[1] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[2] This is a paraphrase of N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 291. The full quote reads, "Bruno Latour has argued that we have never been modern; the seriated history of cybernetics—emerging from networks at once materially real, socially regulated, and discursively constructed—suggests, for similar reasons, that we have always been posthuman." Critical animal theorists have appropriated Hayles' argument to characterize how the category of the "human," regardless of historical period, has always been constructed through a relation to animals.
[3] For discussions of Anglo-Saxon burial and Godwine's ship, see above 105-7 and 165-67, respectively.

human relationship with animals should be.[4] Just because a culture understands the human-animal divide as permeable does not mean it thought itself ethically responsible for nonhuman animals (or at least ethically responsible in the way some of us are today). In Chapter 2, we saw Beowulf traverse the stormy seas and swim underwater using just his body, an ability that I argued reflected a desire of the poet to imagine what was like being a sea creature. At the same time, the poem depicts the hero energetically slaughtering the ocean's inhabitants. Likewise, Abraham and his army may have "become-wolf" to save their captured kin, but their battle with the Elamites is treated as wolf-on-wolf violence, the good lupines ending the bad Elamite ones. In Anglo-Saxon England, then, it appears that desiring to be like an animal and depicting its killing was not considered to be a contradiction.

"Identifying with the Beast" has been only a single step toward determining what forms Anglo-Saxon posthumanism took and the use thinking about it holds for us today. By focusing my analysis on how different concepts of animality produced human subjectivity and society in the period, I have not had the opportunity yet to account for some imaginative works in which animals feature centrally. Foremost among the texts that will be reinterpreted in the coming years through the lens of posthumanism are the riddle collections of Aldhelm and the Exeter Book.[5] The

[4] On the disagreements in defining the term "posthumanism," see Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xi-xxxiv. See also Christopher Peterson, "The Posthumanism to Come," *Angelaki* 16:2 (2011): 127-41 and Cary Wolfe, "Response to Christopher Peterson, 'The Posthumanism to Come,'" *Angelaki* 16.2 (2011): 189-93.

[5] Of course, useful work is being done in this vein already. See for instance Robert Stanton, "Mimicry, Subjectivity, and

riddles feature animals speaking in what is depicted as their own voice, expressing feelings of joy, sadness, and longing that must have resonated with the riddles' audience. While this kind of ventriloquism is always anthropomorphic and to some degree a form of violence inflicted on the being spoken for, the riddles do raise important questions for the role of literary texts in (re)constituting the human-animal relationship.[6] Is it best for imaginative works to seek to preserve the alterity of nonhuman species, and if so, what are the ways they can go about doing this? On the other hand, if we cannot escape anthropomorphism, what is the most useful form of anthropomorphism to generate an ethical response to nonhumans? Studies will also look more closely at charms and texts like the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, which often feature the treatment of injured animals by humans and the use of animal parts to treat injuries of the human body and the land. Finally, there will be a reconsideration of how objects made of animals or on which animals are inscribed trouble the autonomy of the human subject. I have gestured briefly toward this throughout my study, especially in my discussions of helmets and banners, but the animals that frequently appear in the margins of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts or in the form of zoomorphic initials could benefit from further analysis.[7] And what of the manuscripts themselves, made from the flesh of hundreds of dead animals? As Bruce Holsinger

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the Embodied Voice in Anglo-Saxon Bird Riddles," in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. Irit Ruth Kleiman (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), 29-43.

[6] Erica Fudge, however, argues that "without anthropomorphism we are unable to comprehend and represent the presence of an animal...anthropomorphism might actually serve an ethical function: if we don't believe that in some way we can communicate with and understand animals, what is to make us stop and think as we experiment upon them, eat them, put them in cages?" (*Animal* [London: Reaktion Books, 2002], 76)

[7] For an excellent study already published, see Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*.

reminds us, "for medievalists, the question of the animal is qualitatively different and more immanent than for scholars in later fields. For with some important exceptions…medieval literature survives to us primarily *on* and *as* animal."[8] The medieval book reminds us how human culture has always been produced through the labor and sacrifice of animals in their real and represented forms.

The Anglo-Saxon period, then, has much to offer to animal studies. The positive identifications the Anglo-Saxons made between the greatest members of their society and animals, domesticated and wild, call on critical animal theorists to pay closer attention to analogous identifications in other historical periods and in popular fiction. Timothy Clark notes, "Writing that attempts an imaginary identification across the species barrier forms a beguiling and under-recognised practice…Few projects in the arts of language are perhaps more difficult to judge, nor is there yet much discussion of why many people find such writing compelling."[9] Much like the Anglo-Saxons imagined their heroes as using their bodies in ways analogous to animals, many of our most popular characters today—the superheroes Batman and Spider-Man come immediately to mind—feature similar kinds of associations with animals. At the same time, Batman and Spider-Man stories feature them overcoming various forms of animality of or marked on the body in the case of villains like Man-Bat,

[8] Bruce Holsinger, "Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009), 616-623; at 619 (emphasis in original). See also Sarah Kay, "Legible Skins: Animals and the Ethics of Medieval Reading," *Postmedieval* 2.1 (2012), 13-32.
[9] Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 195.

Killer Croc, the Vulture, and Rhino. Critical animal theorists need to expand the canon of works they analyze and seek to understand how this contradiction has persisted and continues to shape the human-animal relationship.

The Anglo-Saxons also remind us to be humble. Jennifer Neville argues that "Representations of the natural world in Old English poetry…reflect the necessity as well as the fragility of human society."[10] The Anglo-Saxons believed that human society was necessary to protect individuals from the threat of the natural world, and in doing so, they were forced to acknowledge that humans were not in ultimate control of the planet – that ability belonged to God alone. This weakness, this recognition that they were part of a system but unable to completely master it, generated a kind of humility that is for the most part foreign to our understanding today. It is a humility, I think, we would do well to adopt.

[10] Neville, *Representatioins of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*, 202.

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